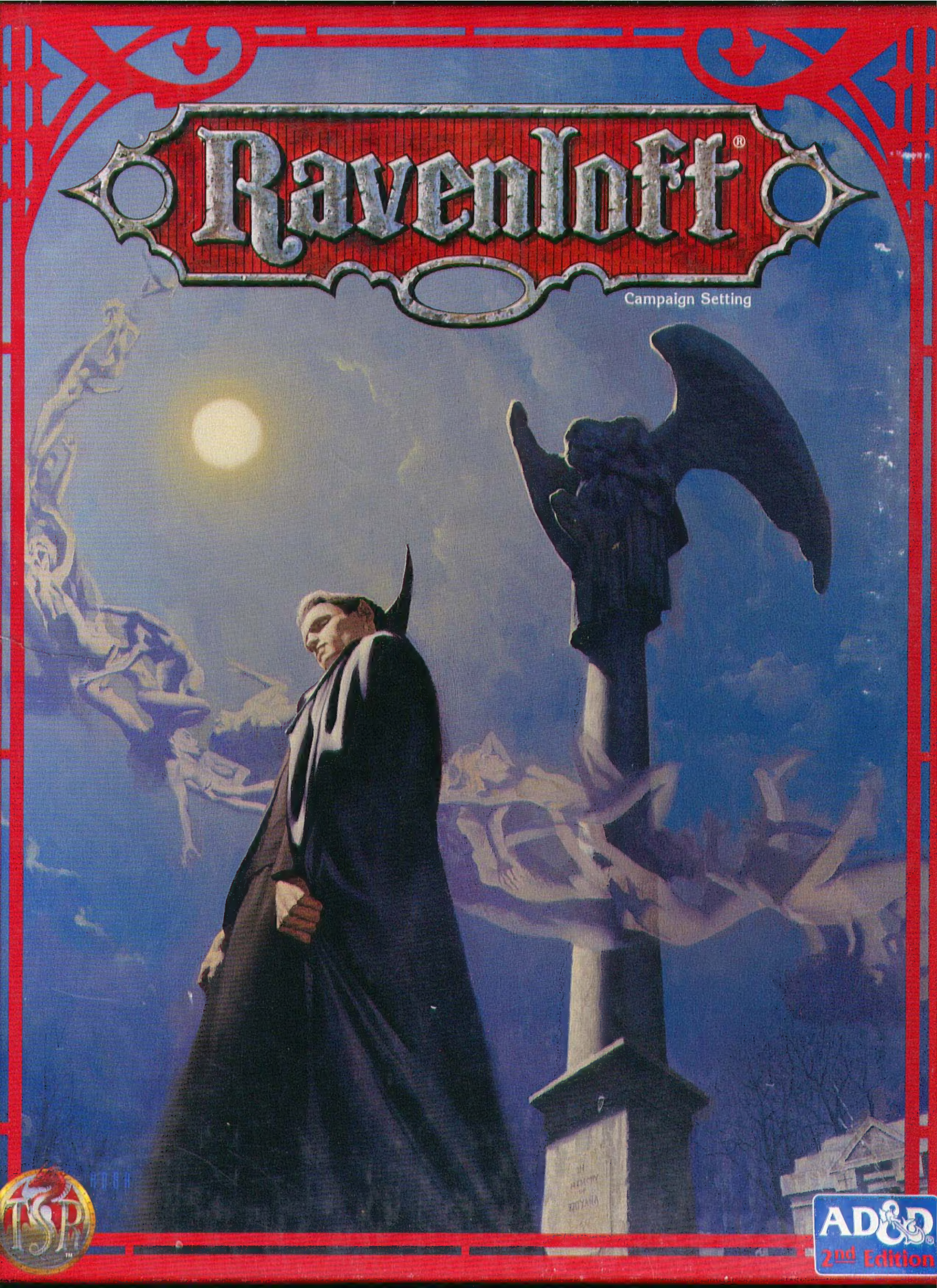
# Ravenloft®

Campaign Setting



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The Warrior



The Warrior

The Rogue



The Rogue

The Priest



The Priest

The Wizard



The Wizard

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9 The Torturer

9 The Torturer

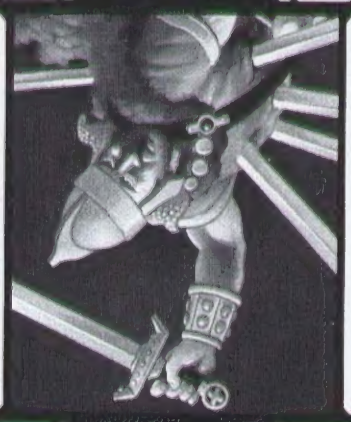
8 The Dictator

8 The Dictator

7 The Hooded Man

7 The Hooded Man

6 The Berserker



6 The Berserker

5 The Myrmidon

5 The Myrmidon

4 The Mercenary

4 The Mercenary

3 The Soldier

3 The Soldier

2 The Paladin

2 The Paladin

1 The Avenger

1 The Avenger

1 The Swashbuckler

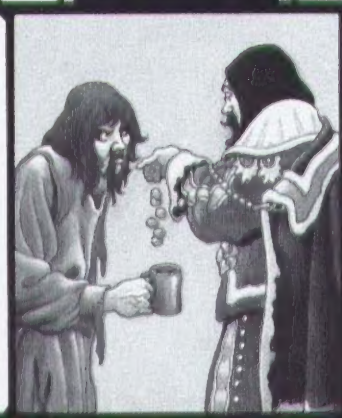
2 The Philanthropist

3 The Trader

4 The Merchant

5 The Guildsman

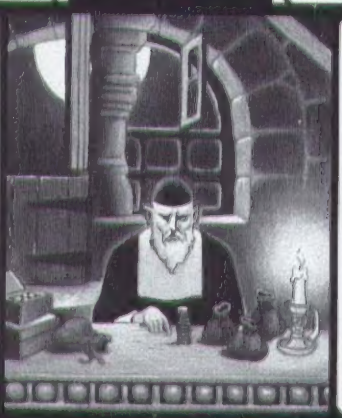
6 The Beggar



7 The Thief

8 The Tax Collector

9 The Miser



1 The Monk



1 The Monk

2 The Missionary



2 The Missionary

3 The Healer



3 The Healer

4 The Shepherd



4 The Shepherd

5 The Druid



5 The Druid

6 The Anarchist



6 The Anarchist

7 The Charlatan



7 The Charlatan

8 The Bishop



8 The Bishop

9 The Traitor



9 The Traitor

1 The Transmuter

1 The Transmuter

2 The Diviner

2 The Diviner

3 The Enchanter

3 The Enchanter

4 The Abjurer

4 The Abjurer

5 The Elementalist

5 The Elementalist

6 The Invoker

6 The Invoker

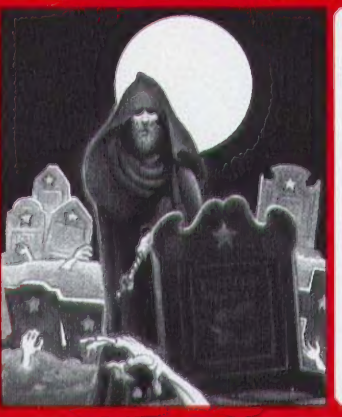
7 The Illusionist

7 The Illusionist

8 The Necromancer

8 The Necromancer

9 The Conjurer



9 The Conjurer

The Artifact
The Artifact


The Marionette
The Marionette


The Temptress
The Temptress


The Beast
The Beast


The Broken One
The Broken One

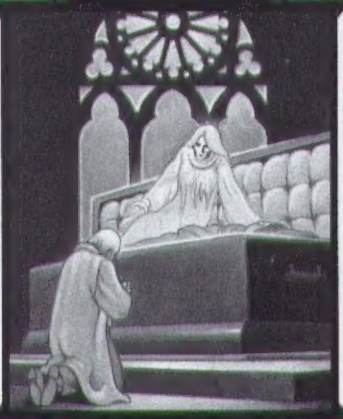

The Darklord
The Darklord


The Donjon
The Donjon


The Raven
The Raven


The Esper
The Esper

The Ghost



The Ghost

The Mists

The Mists

The Horseman

The Horseman

The Innocent

The Innocent

The Hangman

The Hangman

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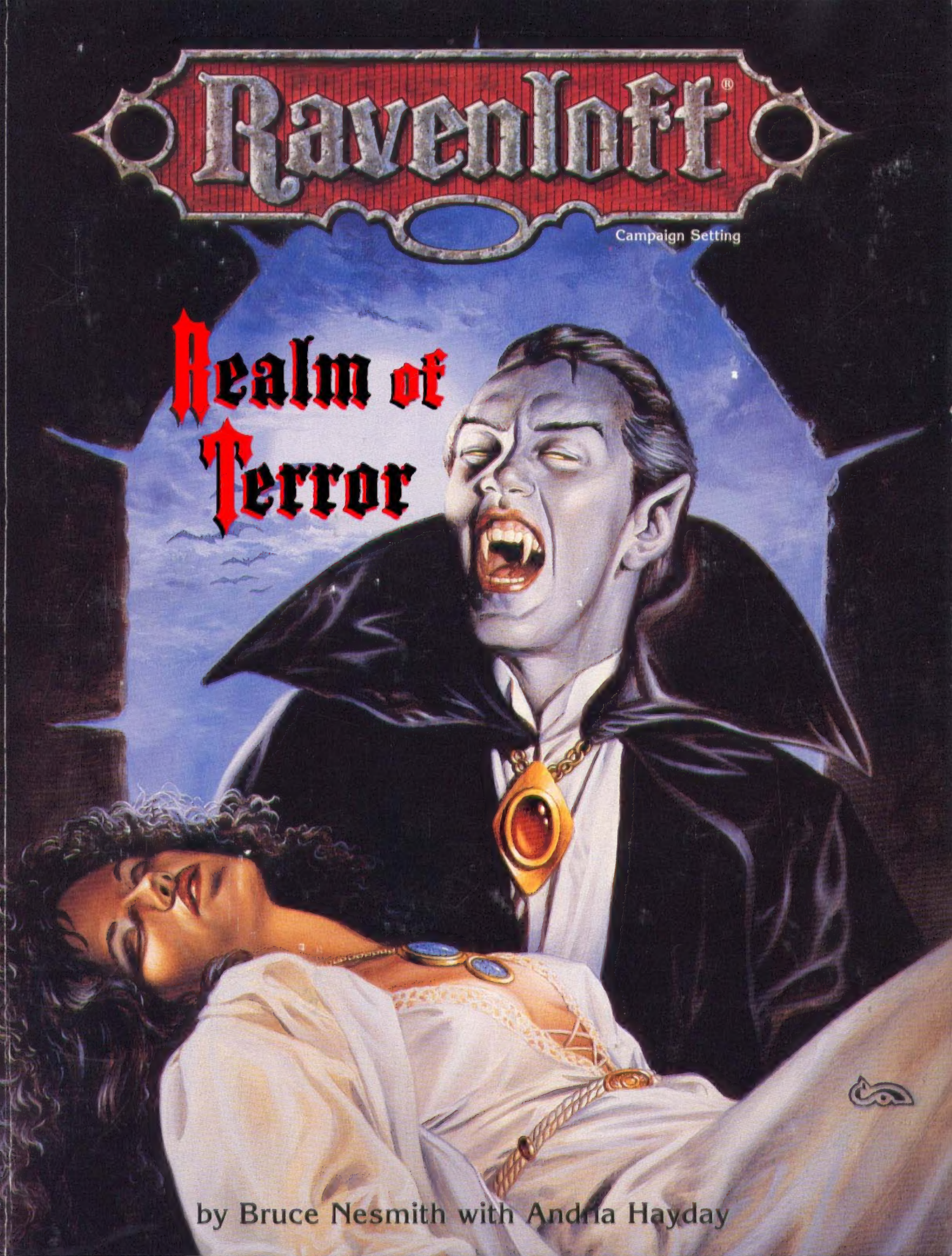
# Ravenloft®

Campaign Setting

# Realm of Terror



by Bruce Nesmith with Andria Hayday

# REALM OF TERROR

## Core Rules for the RAVENLOFT® Campaign Setting

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Bill Slavicsek, Lisa Smedman, Teeuwynn Woodruff,
and especially Tracy and Laura Hickman.

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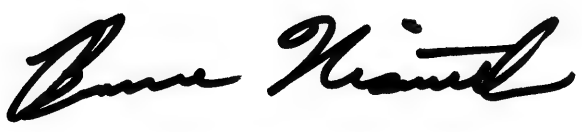
# FOREWORD

For those who don't know the story, the world we call Ravenloft has roots planted deep in the history of TSR, Inc. In 1982, Tracy and Laura Hickman wrote *Ravenloft* (I6), a replayable 32-page AD&D® adventure designed to fit any campaign. This tale of gothic horror was a ground-breaking effort in every way, and it was filled with challenges. Our good friend Curtis Smith edited the product, "terrifying" everyone with his desire for perfection. (We originally met Curtis in college, but we were also at TSR then, so we know this firsthand.) As with many developmental editors, Curtis's efforts were not generally recognized except by those who worked alongside him. David C. Sutherland III was the cartographer, creating the first three-dimensional maps in the hobby game industry. (He did much of that work on his own time, since 3-D maps take far longer to render than normal, orthographic maps.) Clyde Caldwell rendered a magnificent cover, bringing Strahd von Zarovich, Ravenloft's vampire lord, to life (or is it *un*life?).

When it was published, *Ravenloft* became the single best-selling adventure in TSR's history, and we count it among our personal all-time favorites. Years later—in 1989 to be exact—we were presented with the opportunity to turn the *Ravenloft* adventure into an entire game world, featuring that same fantasy horror theme. Like the original adventure, it held many challenges, but it was a labor of love for us both. Dave Sutherland once again rendered the maps with fabulous results, and Clyde Caldwell painted an outstanding new cover. Graphic designer Roy Parker and interior artist Stephen Fabian deserve kudos for enhancing the mood and overall quality of the product.

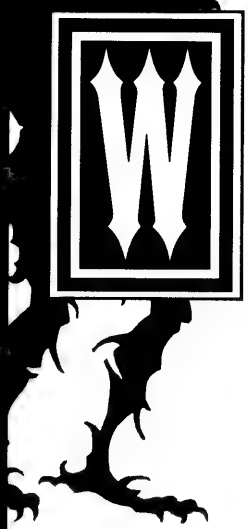
Since then, the RAVENLOFT® game line has flourished. Other key designers, editors, and artists have joined us in tending the campaign world simply for the enjoyment it brings—including William W. Connors, co-designer of *Forbidden Lore*, and David Wise, editor of the product now in your hands. This new RAVENLOFT boxed set combines the heart of *Forbidden Lore* with the original *Realm of Terror* campaign set. It's not a "2nd edition" in the traditional sense; while minor updates have occurred, no fundamental changes to the rules or setting have been made. Rather, this is a fresh reorganization with a few new wrinkles.

We are grateful to have had the opportunity to create a world that so many players enjoy, and we know that all who have worked on RAVENLOFT products feel the same. We prefer not to think of the RAVENLOFT campaign setting as *our* world, but as *your* world. We hope it haunts and thrills you for years to come!



# FOREWORD

# INTRODUCTION: FROM GOTHIC ROOTS



*hat though the field be lost?*
*All is not lost; Th'unconquerable Will,*
*And courage never to submit or yield . . .*
—John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Dark, gloomy castles, desolate landscapes, black clouds racing against the moon—these are the trappings of the Gothic novel. Early literature of that genre is replete with stories of mystery, fear, and desire; of vulnerable heroines imprisoned in a fortress, their purity and sanity assaulted by the evil lord of the manor. Later novels such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* push the heroine into the wings while Evil itself steps into the limelight. Such is the classic horror in which the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting sinks its roots. That macabre darkness can creep into any campaign, any world, if one knows the elements that give it life, but in the land of the Mists it has reached poisonous fruition.

## The Nature of Gothic Horror

The creation of fear is at the heart of all horror, yet the traditional Gothic model differs a great deal from today's cinematic and literary blood orgies. Modern horror routinely slices, dices, and disembowels its victims to create a sense of fear. The underlying theme is that the human animal is simply nothing more than *meat*. For all its claims to superior intelligence and divine favor, humanity can be splattered against the bleak wall of hopelessness without so much as a nod to its dreams of truth and nobility—and fear is generated in the realization of that cold, hard reality. In a common "slasher" film, the question is not so much *what* will happen as *when*. Hope that springs forth with the coming of dawn is inevitably crushed, for even if the hero can escape the maniac with a cleaver, the monster never dies and the poor hero must spend the rest of his days looking over his shoulder.

Gothic horror, by contrast, relies on subtler techniques. It teases and taunts its victims with terrors shrouded in mist. Often the victim is blind to the evil that hovers above like a ravenous spider, and sometimes evil masquerades as virtue, revealing its true nature only too late. By the time danger becomes apparent to the victim, death by an ordinary knife might seem a relief.

There is a fundamental acceptance of the existence of virtue and goodness in the Gothic genre, and evil is all the more terrible for the comparison. The reader doesn't wonder *how* the hero and heroine will die, but whether they are spiritually strong enough to survive the blackest night. Fear comes not from a sense of the impending fall of an axe, but from the horrifying truths and temptations that assault them as they fight for their lives.

In the modern horror tale, the source of evil is usually identified early, for it remains unstoppable despite that knowledge. In the Gothic tale, evil is something sinister and unknown. A dark mystery lies beneath the horror, and the protagonists are compelled to unravel it. The innocents are trapped in a whirlpool of conflicting emotion, driven by the desire to learn the awful truth that they sense lies beyond that black shroud, yet dreading it all the while. With each step beyond their comfortable, day-lit world, they discover that reality is more twisted than they could possibly have understood, and that their own virtues may not be sufficient to see them to the dawn.

## Dark Plots and Antiheroes

Traditional Gothic plots involve strange birthmarks, family curses, and bastard children whose origins are at best uncertain. Deformities are commonplace: a scar, a hump, enormous hands, bulging eyes—some singular affliction makes the whole grotesque,

# INTRODUCTION: FROM GOTHIC ROOTS

either reflecting inner evil or ironically masking inner virtue. Ancient secrets abound, promising both enlightenment and despair to those who reveal them. The sins of ancestors (who are not always "dearly departed") form the legacy of those alive today, and the unlucky inheritors may be the last to fully comprehend their plight.

Purely supernatural plots are driven by the antiheroes themselves: dark, fallen figures who are no longer human. Yet some part of them is attractive, perhaps more *human* than "decent" society, and therein lies the horror. Byron, Keats, Shelley—some of the giants of the Romantic period (during which the Gothic novel reached its peak)—believed that the character of Satan in John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* was the real champion of humanity, for the fallen angel refused to despair at his expulsion from paradise. The quotation that begins this introduction (spoken by that character) is the battle cry of the Gothic antihero, and it is both valiant and futile, both exciting and terrifying. Hence, Gothic protagonists experience confusion and horror as creatures they call monsters tear their most fundamental beliefs into bloody shreds, and with the dawn comes a new, unwelcome definition of good and evil.

Vampires, ghosts, and werewolves lead the pack of Gothic monstrosities. In each case, the creature once lived as a normal mortal, though its days were often tainted by sorrow or sin. Because they can so closely resemble humans, they represent the dark side of humanity, and they are terrifying in a way that Freddy Kreuger could never be. These inhuman villains are the source of the melancholy or brooding evil that pervades most Gothic horror. The monster's existence is rarely satisfying: Though Dracula is devoid of virtue, he still has emotions and desires that are tragically familiar. An intense loneliness or unhappiness drives the dark deeds of many beasts. (This doesn't excuse their actions; it merely explains them.) For example, when Mary Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein confronts his monstrous creation—alone in an icy wasteland, high in the mountains of Switzerland—the monster protests:

*I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous.*

A pure heart might soften to such a lament—to do so would only be human, but therein lies destruction. The fiend has already murdered an innocent child, despite his claims to "no misdeed." To make things worse, the creature has been rejected by his creator from the moment he first opened his prosthetic eyes. He never had a chance to be good, and the reader must wonder who is the more evil, man or monster?

## Gothic vs. Modern Horror in an RPG

Why bother to understand the nature of Gothic horror when we live in a modern age? Because the AD&D® game, when properly played, has a lot more in common with the romance of the past than the realism of the present, as defined above. AD&D is all about the struggle between good and evil, and it requires a setting where those lines are clearly and dramatically drawn. Discovering the whole story surrounding the existence of that monstrous villain is *at least* as interesting and important as defeating it. Certainly it's possible to run a RAVENLOFT game as a straight "hack 'n slash" operation with undead and the like, but where is there room for role-playing in that approach? Those who can't move beyond the swing of the sword will stick to video games.

## Landscape

Ravenloft, like other traditional Gothic settings, is a world of startlingly beautiful, seductive settings that have at once an allure and a cold, lonely edge. By day the settings are breathtaking: The windswept heath blazes with autumn color, soaring peaks with icy summits pierce the sky, mountain streams tumble into an explosion of glittering spray. The woods are wild, rambling, and dense, with velvet evergreens and gleaming silver aspens or armies of ancient timber, towering and black. Mountain lakes, too deep to secure anchor, mirror clouds that race across the sky. But as the sun drifts west and the granite cliffs circling a lake reflect shades of gold in the water, then red, it becomes evident that this is no place for travelers to linger. Yet tarry they will. . . .

When night falls, the world is cloaked in impenetrable darkness. A chill rises from the soil and contaminates the air. Suddenly, "breathtaking" has new meaning.

## Setting

Within these wild, desolate places lie the physical structures of the Gothic scene: castle, mansion, or tower. Whatever the structure, it is most often massive and gloomy, with vaulted ceilings, sweeping staircases, and dark, endless hallways. Like vines whose sinewy arms are slowly strangling the garden, the Gothic setting suggests a sinister animation. In Castle Dracula the walls are "frowning" and the castle "crouched" upon a precipice. In some tales the house is actually animate, luring victims into its embrace and never allowing them to leave.

A feeling of age and ruin often permeates the setting, even if the occupants make efforts to the contrary. Dust cloaks the floors, stone walls crumble in decay, and iron gates are paralyzed by rust. If at first the grim nature of the setting is not obvious, it soon becomes so, as the

protagonist discovers secret passages and underground labyrinths as dark and twisted as the evil dwelling within. It is a place where cosmic forces have entered the earthly realm to feed on the innocence of mortals.

Few Gothic settings exclude the dungeon, the tower, the chapel, or the crypt. These places stretch the envelope of reality toward the extremes of Heaven and Hell, perhaps to ease the penetration of unearthly powers. Graveyards veiled in mist, tolling bells, tower windows with a single flickering light, monasteries abandoned, save for a few shrouded figures who slip through the passages at night like shadows—these too fit the Gothic tradition. Enter Edgar Allan Poe's "House of Usher" and find a consummate Gothic setting:

*I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house . . . upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eyelike windows . . . and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul. . . . About the whole of the place there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven . . . a pestilent and mystic vapor, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible and leaden-hued. . . . Minute fungi spread over the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. . . .*

*The room in which I found myself was large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. . . . I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. . . .*

Actually, he breathed an atmosphere of death, but why quibble over details?

## The Power of Nature

Vast landscapes and massive castles may make the ordinary human seem small, but they are nothing compared to the intimidation of Nature's awesome forces. The tempest of winds, crash of thunder, flash of lightning—no mortal can match such powers. Throughout time, men hungering for adventure have tested their mettle against Nature. The explorer at the mountain's summit knows he is completely at her mercy; she can burn him or freeze him, sustain him or let him starve. But she is impartial, even uncaring, and the adventurer knows that his survival rests solely with himself.

Nature also tests man in Gothic horror. It may sap his strength with driving hail or chill his blood with icy waters, but more often it simply erodes his will. Ceaseless, cold, and misty rains dampen the strongest of spirits. Dark clouds hang in the air like a threat, or gather to signal imminent doom.

In Gothic literature, Nature may not seem impartial at all, but firmly allied with evil. And the victim, therefore, is even more powerless than he or she imagined.

## Sensuality and Seduction

Gothic horror is steeped with sensuality. Villain and victim alike are keenly aware of touch, taste, sound, and smell. Every pore is tuned to danger. Sweat beads at the back of a man's neck until it trickles coldly down his spine. The heart beats in time with the tapping of a talon on the window pane. When a victim feels the fangs of a vampiress pressing into his neck, he feels them denting his flesh even before they pierce the skin. When terror is imminent, sensations warp and intensify. The heart quickens. The low, mournful howling in the copse rises agonizingly to a feverish pitch. Blood surges until it courses through the victim's brain with a deafening roar.

Seduction is a common theme, too, but it's not limited to the most obvious, romantic sense. Fragrant orchards entice wanderers to linger though twilight is nearing. A vampire cannot enter a home until the victim, lulled by its charms, invites it in. Somehow, some way, the victim is drawn toward a situation he or she ordinarily would—or should—resist.

## Dream a Little Dream

Darkness slips into Ravenloft the way a dream creeps into a sleeper's mind. It comes slowly, softly, and there is no halting its approach. As in a dream, the lines between what is real and false begin to blur, and control begins to slip away when it's wanted most.

Elements that echo dreams fill every crevice of Gothic horror. Fog, mist, twilight—all of them blur the senses to create confusion and uncertainty. Every shadow may be the enemy, every breeze the breath of evil. It matters not if such suspicions are real, because the *fear* is real. Gothic literature is a tour of the dark, primitive corners of the mind. As a victim races through the shadowy labyrinth beneath the castle in search of freedom, the real gauntlet lies within his or her thoughts—where the horrors can be just as deadly.

Dreams themselves play a prominent role in Gothic literature. Visions, trances, brain fevers, and sleeping spells all wrench the victim from the relative security of an ordinary world. In sleep, horrors can invade the victim's mind just as they enter the earthly realm: softly, insidiously, as if to say, "Here I am . . . Here I am . . . Open your eyes and see."

Ironically, because dreams and hazy visions can be discounted as "imagination," the victim often disbelieves what is seen or heard. But perhaps that's precisely what the "evil" is seeking. When the victim knows what he faces, yet chooses to disbelieve, he often steps willingly into danger. Too late he realizes his mistake, and for his new master the victory will be all the more sweet.

## And, of Course, Heroes

The last, and perhaps most important, element of Gothic literature is the stalwart hero. All the dark elements—the suffocating horror, the seemingly insurmountable evil—would render this genre pointless without the ever-defiant forces of good to struggle through the endless night. In essence, the sword, the wand, and the holy symbol cannot destroy the darkness, but they can at least hold it at bay for a while. Strahd von Zarovich and all his fellow darklords may or may not be impossible to defeat, but as long as there are men and women of courage and conviction, there will always be another dawn in Ravenloft . . . just as there will always be another dusk!

# 1: THE DEMIPLANE OF DREAD

Many centuries past, in a world now forgotten, the warrior-noble Strahd von Zarovich settled in a land called Barovia, in a castle known as Ravenloft. That castle, and the horrid events which took place there, spawned an entire realm of terror.

Castle Ravenloft now lies lost within the Ethereal Plane, in the Demiplane of Dread. The fortress sits in the center of the misty realm like a beating heart, pumping evil and sorrow to even the most distant fingers of the land. The realm takes its name from Strahd's castle; "Ravenloft" has become synonymous with the entire plane. "Castle Ravenloft" refers to the fortress itself.

## The Tome of Strahd

The notes below are excerpted from an ancient journal, penned in the hand of Count Strahd von Zarovich. The daring thieves who obtained this information now walk the land of the Mists as mindless undead. Do not let their efforts come to naught. Read this passage and learn the origins of this shadowy realm of terror.

*I am the Ancient, I am the Land. My beginnings are lost in the darkness of the past. I was the warrior, I was good and just. I thundered across the land like the wrath of a righteous god, but the war years and all the killing wore down my soul as the wind wears stone into sand. All goodness slipped from my life; I found my youth and strength gone, and all I had left was death.*

*My army settled in the valley of Barovia and took power in the name of the gods, but without divine grace or justice. I called for my family, long unseated from their ancient thrones, and brought them here to settle in Castle Ravenloft. They came with a younger brother of mine, Sergei. He was handsome and youthful. I hated him for both.*

*Sergei had plucked from the families of the valley one whose spirit shone above all others: a rare beauty, who was called "perfection," "joy," and "treasure." Her name was Tatyana, and I longed for her to be mine. I loved her with all my heart. I loved her for her youth. I loved her for her joy.*

*But she spurned me! "Old one" was my name to her—"elder" and "brother" also. Her heart went to Sergei. They were betrothed. The date was set.*

*With words she called me "brother," but when I looked into her eyes they reflected another name: "death." It was the death of the aged that she saw in me. She loved her youth and enjoyed it. But I had squandered mine. The death she saw in me turned her from me. And so I came to hate death, my death. My hate was very strong; I would not be called "death" so soon.*

*And so I made a pact with Death itself, a pact of blood. On the day of the wedding, I killed Sergei, my brother. My pact was sealed with his blood.*

*I found Tatyana weeping in the garden east of the chapel. She fled from me. She would not let me explain, and a great anger swelled within me. She had to understand the pact I made for her. I pursued her. Finally, in despair she flung herself from the walls of Ravenloft, and I watched everything I ever wanted fall from my grasp forever.*

*It was a thousand feet through the mists, but no trace of her was ever found. Not even I know her final fate.*

*Arrows from the castle guards pierced me to my soul, but I did not die. Nor did I live. I became undead, forever. . . .*

Though sages speculate that this story is incomplete, and may even have been embellished by Strahd, it does much to explain the origins of the land of the Mists.

### ✣ Time Line of Events ✣

**351** Barovia appears in Ravenloft
**470** The gypsy Madame Eva and Strahd forge an alliance
**528** Powerful heroes assault Castle Ravenloft and perish (see *House of Strahd* [9418])
**542** Azalin the lich enters Ravenloft
**547** Forlorn appears (featured in the *Castles Forlorn* boxed adventure [1088])
**575** Arak and Lamordia appear
**579** The domain of Mordent enters Ravenloft
**579** Darkon appears
**581** Illithid spawn Bluetspur (featured in *Thoughts of Darkness* [9364])
**588** Keening appears
**593** Gundarak is formed
**603** Invidia takes shape
**610** Harkon Lukas the wolfwere enters Ravenloft
**613** Kartakass (Lukas's domain) appears
**625** Valachan takes shape
**682** Nova Vaasa appears
**683** Lamordia and the Nightmare Lands join the Core
**684** Borca appears
**689** Vlad Drakov enters Ravenloft
**690** Falkovnia appears
**691** Tepest appears
**694** Richemulot appears
**698** Markovia is formed
**700** Drakov invades Darkon and is repelled
**702** G'Henna appears
**704** Drakov invades Darkon and is repelled
**707** Dementlieu appears
**708** Arkandale appears
**711** Drakov invades Darkon and is repelled
**714** Hazlan takes shape
**715** Dorvinia takes shape
**720** Lord Soth enters Ravenloft and Sithicus takes shape
**722** Drakov invades Darkon and is repelled
**730** Verbrek takes shape
**735** This time line is recorded (campaigns begin); the Vistani seer Hyskosa prophesies the Grand Conjunction
**736** The first verse of Hyskosa's hexad is fulfilled (see *Feast of Goblyns* [9298])
**737** The second verse of Hyskosa's prophecy comes to pass (see *Ship of Horror* [9321])
**738** The third couplet of Hyskosa's hexad manifests (see *Touch of Death* [9338])
**739** The fourth verse of the dire prophecy transpires (see *Night of the Walking Dead* [9352])
**740** In his haste to initiate the Grand Conjunction, Azalin forces the *sixth* couplet of Hyskosa's prophecy to befall, and the great event begins; the fifth verse is subsequently fulfilled, out of order, so the Grand Conjunction collapses (see *From the Shadows* [9375] and *Roots of Evil* [9413])

When Strahd made his mysterious pact with "Death," the fate of his land and people was irrevocably changed. He had opened a door. A dark shadow of Barovia lay beyond that door, and it became the core of the Ravenloft demiplane. Strahd became its vampire lord.

No one knows exactly how or why these events occurred. Was it a curse on Barovia or the castle itself? Was it the work of the dark power (or powers) with whom Strahd made his pact? Or was it the rage and sorrow that followed, as Tatyana was lost and Strahd vented his torment by murdering all those within the castle walls? Perhaps it was all of these reasons, and perhaps it was none. It seems that Strahd himself has been left to wonder how it all occurred, for if he knew what created the land of the Mists, it is certain he would have taken steps to reverse the process. Many scholars consider it unwise to ponder the question long.

## The Growth of a Demiplane

For nearly two centuries Barovia was the only land in Ravenloft. The unfortunate people in Castle Ravenloft, drawn into the demiplane with Strahd, were the only creatures there, living or dead. The domain was surrounded by a misty border which imprisoned them all.

Then, others stepped out of the mists. Some were good and some were evil, but not all of them were human. Azalin, a powerful lich, was one of the first evil beings to enter Strahd's realm. His story is recorded in *Domains and Denizens* (the other book in this boxed set). Eventually Azalin discovered what many have learned since: The land is alive. It does not breathe as a creature does, but it responds to the life within it. The land can grow and change, and it creates new earth for those whose evil is strong enough to draw attention.

Hoping to escape, Azalin stepped into the

misty border and began to wander through the vapors. In time, new lands spread before him, and he became the lord of his own domain. Like Strahd, he was imprisoned within it. Other inhabitants could travel across the border from one domain to the next, but he and Strahd would never stand face to face again, until the Grand Conjunction (see page 18).

In the ensuing years, other domains formed. Bit by bit, the demiplane spread. Ravenloft now contains dozens of domains. Each was created for one man, woman, or creature, or for an inseparable pair or trio. Sometimes, like Strahd, a lord is drawn from another world. In other cases, he or she is a native of the demiplane Ravenloft. In every instance, the lord receives tremendous powers from the land, but it is a place in which he or she is condemned to remain forever.

## Defining the Demiplane

Ravenloft is not of this world or any other. It exists as a microcosm unto itself, a solid and physical dimension within the Ethereal Plane that follows its own mystical set of laws.

The land of the Mists is not stable. Over time, some of its dark domains have expanded, condensed, coalesced, or disappeared altogether. Ravenloft is smaller than most worlds on the Prime Material Plane, such as Krynn (of the DRAGONLANCE® saga) and Toril (of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting), but unlike them the demiplane has no fixed size. In fact, it appears to float about the Ethereal Plane as well as change shape, extending its misty fingers into other worlds and planes to absorb characters and land.

For those who visit this realm, time passes with agonizing slowness, especially after sunset. Some who have escaped after watching the moon drag across Ravenloft's heavens for a dozen months claim that each year in the land of the Mists equals nearly two in any other world. They are wearied by the experience, but gain no benefits from it.

## The Mists

In any world, mists and fog can plague travelers by blurring senses, concealing terrors, or leading ships to watery graves. Ravenloft has such ordinary vapors, too, but it is also home to the *Ravenloft Mists*—a force more deadly than any natural phenomenon.

The Mists appear to be nothing more than a manifestation of the Border Ethereal. They surround the demiplane at all times, creating the *Misty Border*. They radiate no aura of magic, nor reveal any alignment or sign of life. To all eyes they appear to be normal fog, yet they are anything but "normal." The Mists can reach into the Prime Material Plane and draw unsuspecting characters into Ravenloft. With time, they can surround an entire portion of land and recreate or consume it, too.

No one (except the Dungeon Master) can command the Mists to perform in this fashion—where the Mists appear in the Prime Material Plane and whom they carry into Ravenloft is beyond the control of anyone, living or dead. However, when a character has a dark enough need or desire, Ravenloft may respond. Usually the Mists are content to transport a few hapless travelers, leaving others behind, but some sages speak of entire armies that have vanished in a fog, and it is conceivable that the Mists of Ravenloft have swallowed their ranks.

The following example illustrates how an unsuspecting character can be carried into Ravenloft: Mika the Meek, priest of Ilmater, is returning to Waterdeep after a visit to Dragonspear Castle. A fog rolls in from the sea, and Mika is shrouded in a mist from which he cannot escape. Still Mika walks onward, and he soon finds himself in Ravenloft.

Once the Mists have engulfed any intelligent creature outside of Ravenloft, he or she must complete the journey to the demiplane. There is no saving throw. Even if the traveler stands still, the Mists eventually rise and characters find themselves in Ravenloft. The actual

passage between planes is never witnessed, for anyone close enough to see the transport of another character becomes an accidental voyager, too.

In nearly every case, the Mists are indistinguishable from normal fog, but exceptions do exist. For example, if the victims are traveling in the Ethereal Plane, no mists foretell their fate. One moment they are in the Ethereal and the next they are somewhere in Ravenloft, with a few wisps of vapor snaking around their feet.

These mystical vapors are permanent fixtures of Ravenloft's Misty Border, but they can rise from the soil anywhere in the demiplane, creating a temporary pocket of doom. As a result, a character may be transported from place to place within the domains—from fog bank to fog bank—and be powerless to stop it. This also means a character who enters the demiplane from another world may be deposited anywhere in Ravenloft, stranded by the vapors that dissipate around him or her.

Characters in Ravenloft who willingly step into the Misty Border can wander within it. They walk in a bewildering, foggy dream world, where time and space seem twisted and tangled. If their desire to remain in this limbo is strong enough, they can remain, but when their will to stay in the border falters, they find themselves in one of Ravenloft's domains within an hour. No one can predict or control where a wanderer emerges—that is determined by the forces of Ravenloft.

The Misty Border is not completely void of life, either. Small, temporary domains sometimes form within it. The Border is also home to many wandering monsters. Just as a character can choose to stay in the Mists, so can a creature, particularly one without the brains or personality to establish a domain. These creatures lurk within the fog, hoping to encounter travelers. Given such meetings, few travelers choose to remain in the Misty Border for long.

## The Dark Powers

There is a mysterious force, a lingering and majestic curse, behind the dread domains of Ravenloft. Sages often speculate about its nature and try to assess its power. They ponder its earliest beginnings and question its ultimate ends. For all the theories and questions, for all the lore and history, for all their tireless efforts, they know *nothing* of the dark powers.

There are those who say that the dark powers are much like the gods that hold sway in many other planes. Others say they are foul and sinister creatures from beyond wildspace, who have created Ravenloft as some horrible conservatory of evil. Still others claim that there is but one entity controlling Ravenloft, a creature of absolute evil (or good?), and that to call it by a plural name is incorrect. And there are those who insist that there are no dark powers, and that the things attributed to their diabolic influence are mere coincidence. On these points and more, the scholars disagree. The only point that they will all concede is that, in the end, none of them will ever know if they are right or wrong. For whatever the dark powers are or are not, they are certainly mysterious.

Even so, there is much information that *is* available to a sage, if he or she is careful in research and learns to distinguish the colorful tales of folklore and myth from the harsh black and white of the truth: The dark powers have some interest in the evil that beings do inside and outside the misty borders of Ravenloft. Acts of great evil and malice can result in transportation to the dark land. In the most extreme cases, malevolent creatures drawn into Ravenloft find themselves gifted (or cursed) with a domain of their own. Evil beings of less power may find themselves transformed into mist horrors (see the RAVENLOFT appendix of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®), imprisoned in the vapors that surround the land like a vast ethereal sea.

# I: THE DEMIPLANE OF DREAD

There is a common perception that the dark powers tempt people into evil acts. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one has ever been sought out by the dark powers and offered a great reward in exchange for the undertaking of an evil act. Rather, the dark powers are always watching for evil done for evil's sake. They constantly probe time and space with their unimaginable senses. They seem to make no move to foster evil, but act only to reward or punish (depending upon one's point of view) those who have already begun to follow a path of darkness. Thus, the dark powers of Ravenloft never contact someone and offer, say, eternal life in exchange for some foul deed. They operate only after the fact, rewarding or punishing as they see fit.

A last note about the dark powers is in order: There are many who claim to have spoken with them, whatever they may be. It is not uncommon for someone who has committed an act of evil to claim that a sinister, exterior force prompted his or her actions. Many perceive this as the hand of the dark powers, but no such contact has ever been documented. Strahd von Zarovich made a pact with "Death," and some sages believe he was dealing with the dark powers themselves, yet it remains unclear whether he was speaking literally or metaphorically. In the end, there is only one fact in the matter:

*No one knows who or what the dark powers really are.*

This is not to say, of course, that people have not tried to make contact with the dark powers. Many have used various magical, spiritual, and even psionic means to attempt such a feat. Ultimately, however, every effort has met with failure or disaster. Most experts on the history and natural laws of Ravenloft seem to agree that it is unwise and unhealthy to look too deeply into the abyss that lurks at the core of this land.

## Conjunctions

Once in a great while, a part of Ravenloft slides across the Ethereal boundary and merges with lands in other worlds. This is called a *conjunction*, and it may be the one means by which characters can escape the demiplane. Theoretically, even lords such as Strahd might be able to escape the bonds of their domains when one of these occurs. However, the only time this is known to have happened was during the *Grand Conjunction* (see below).

The Mists may or may not be visible or active when a piece of Ravenloft joins another realm. For example, where once there was only a wild and desolate moor on the Prime Material Plane, there might suddenly be a castle on a cliff, with a village below it. Any character could walk between the moor, the castle, and the village without hindrance, but if he or she remained in the area too long, the land might return to the Demiplane of Dread, taking him or her along for the ride.

Throughout time, only a few conjunctions have been reported, and some of those are suspected to be unrelated phenomena. So few have occurred that it is useless to speculate how long any future conjunction might last, or where it will appear. All that is known is that they do end in time, disappearing completely.

Many of Ravenloft's powerful lords hope to learn the secrets of the conjunctions. They seek to cause another conjunction to occur, either to escape their domains or to extend their sway beyond the shadowy realm in which they reside. None has succeeded in this quest. Azalin of Darkon is one such darklord, and he nearly succeeded in unleashing all the captive evil of Ravenloft upon the multiverse when he initiated the Grand Conjunction.

## The Grand Conjunction

In the year 735, the Vistani seer Hyskosa uttered the following prophecy:

*In the house of Daegon the sorcerer born,*
*Through life, unlife, unliving shall scorn;*
*The lifeless child of stern mother found*
*Heralds a time, a night of evil unbound;*
*Seventh time the son of suns doth rise*
*To send the knave an eternity of cries;*
*The light of sky shining over the dead*
*Shall gutter and fail, turning all to red;*
*Inajira will his fortunes reverse,*
*And all shall live with dreaded curse;*
*The bodiless shall journey to the time before,*
*Where happiness to hate makes land of lore.*

According to the Vistana, when all six couplets of the hexad were fulfilled, then the Grand Conjunction would return all the domains of Ravenloft to their worlds of origin. Various scholars have debated the order of the verses, but the version above seems to reflect the actual sequence, as that is the order in which the revelations apparently *should have*

manifested. As it happens, each of the first four verses came to pass, in order, in the years that followed, just as Hyskosa predicted they would. Then a crucial miscalculation on the part of Azalin caused the prophecy to break down.

Evidently the lord of Darkon had long been conducting experiments of his own, seeking a way to penetrate the Mists and escape the confines of his domain. Specifically, he hypothesized that Strahd von Zarovich was the linchpin that held the demiplane together, since the vampire was the first lord of Ravenloft. Perhaps he was aware of Hyskosa's Hexad, for in the year 740 Azalin recruited a group of volunteers to magically travel through time and observe events in Castle Ravenloft on the night that the Mists claimed Barovia and created the Demiplane of Dread. This strategy fulfilled the sixth and last couplet of the Hexad, and it resulted in the acquisition of knowledge that would break the hold of the dark powers over the land. In brief, Azalin's minions spirited the fabled *Holy Symbol of Ravenkind* out of Strahd's castle before that fateful moment when Ravenloft was created, which compromised the integrity of the demiplane and its power to hold the darklords captive in their domains. Then the minions returned to 740, to carry Azalin's phylactery through the Mists and out of Ravenloft. This event triggered the Grand Conjunction. In its wake, all the domains broke apart and began to drift homeward, back to the Prime Material Plane. Azalin and Strahd were the first to escape.

In the midst of the tumult, the very same minions who had helped Azalin went on to fulfill the fifth—actually the *second to last*—couplet of Hyskosa's Hexad. Now the Vistana's full prophecy had come to pass, but Azalin's haste to escape Ravenloft resulted in a completion of the verses out of order, which short-circuited the Grand Conjunction and caused it to collapse. Darklords had scattered in every direction, like thieves from a botched robbery attempt, but the dark powers reached out and drew most of them back into their demiplanar prisons. (The events leading up to and including the Grand Conjunction can be played out in a series of adventure modules. See the years 735–740 of the Barovian time line, on page 13, for specific titles.)

It is fortunate that Azalin's plot to trigger the Grand Conjunction ultimately failed, for so much evil unleashed upon the Prime Material Plane would have had serious implications for the entire multiverse, to say the least. As it happens, a few domain lords did manage to slip through the misty grasp of Ravenloft (though some would argue that they simply were allowed to leave for reasons unknown).

When it was all over, several of the better-known *islands of terror* were gone—Vechor, Farelle, and Sanguinia—and the *Core* (Ravenloft's continent of discontent) had changed as well. Bluetspur, G'Henna, and the Nightmare Lands had broken free of the continent and become islands themselves. Markovia ended up in the Sea of Sorrows, and Valachan gained an access to that body of water, too. Borca and Dorvinia merged, leaving their respective lords trapped within the same domain, forever to struggle for dominance, while Verbrek absorbed Arkandale and cast its lord out of power. Arak became part of Darkon; or rather, the dark elves rumored to live there disappeared without a trace (but *something* still prowls in the subterranean labyrinth left by the drow). And where G'Henna and Markovia had once been, there is now only mist and a bottomless pit called the *Shadow Rift*.

A few new domains appeared, too. Duke Gundar, lord of Gundarak, was assassinated through the machinations of a minion named Dr. Dominiani, who received an island domain of his own, called Dominia. A small cluster of oriental islands, known as Rokushima, have appeared as yet another island domain. And though it has always been there, the Sea of Sorrows now has a lord of its own—the captain of a ghostly ship that will sail the stormy waters until the next apocalyptic conjunction.

## The Domains—An Overview

Ravenloft currently contains about two dozen domains, each the personal prison and realm of a darklord. (Chapters I and II of *Domains and Denizens* describe each domain in detail.) The domains are like small countries with distinct political borders. Each reflects the personality of the lord who prompted its creation. They are solid and real, and most appear no different than the Prime Material Plane. Natives and visitors to this demiplane can travel across the borders between domains. The lords cannot.

Barovia, Strahd's domain, lies at the heart of the Core, but Strahd is not necessarily the most powerful lord in the demiplane, only the first.

Nine domains are islands of terror, floating independently in the hazy seas of the demiplane. Each is permanently surrounded by the Mists. Their origin may be as varied as islands of other worlds, calving from the Core like icebergs, or erupting like fountains of lava that later cool and solidify. Because Ravenloft is ever-changing, these islands may eventually drift together to become one, or may simply sink back into the Mists and vanish.

The lord of each domain is evil, but many of the native people are kind and good at heart. Unfortunately, most are too guarded or afraid to show this side to a stranger. Others are too ignorant or numb to combat the evil around them. Yet, in the midst of this darkness, small bastions of goodness take hold. To survive, they must stay in the shadows and choose their actions carefully. Dr. Rudolph van Richten (see Chapter III in *Domains and Denizens*) is perhaps the most famous of Ravenloft's heroes, but there are others, not the least of which are player characters.

## Forming New Lands

An evil character or creature who has great power or emotion may prompt the formation of a new domain. If he or she resides near the Misty Border, the demiplane may respond to his or her presence. The Mists recede, and the surrounding land takes on a form and solid substance that reflect his or her basic nature. Whole cities may appear, ancient and crumbling, as if they had existed for thousands of years. The creature has no control over this process; it happens whether he or she desires it or not.

The land and the lord are tightly linked, and as a result the lord's powers may be greater than they were before. He or she is also cursed—denied of that which is most coveted. Each domain reflects the personality and past offenses of its lord as a constant reminder of everything he or she was and is. The reminders are inescapable because every domain imprisons its lord.

For example, Strahd is imprisoned in Barovia. He is aware of many things that occur within its borders, and he can sense the entrance of new visitors. He holds sway over many animals and objects in his domain. He is a vampire lord, becoming stronger with age, forever undead. All these powers come from the land itself. But with these wondrous faculties comes personal pain: Every few generations, a woman is born in Barovia who resembles Strahd's lost love, Tatyana. That woman is her reincarnation. He can pursue her, but never attain her. The land itself ensures his eternal torment.

Small minds tend to create small lands. A particularly vicious little creature may spawn a tiny, isolated domain, which can be reached only by those who wander in the Misty Border. Such domains have limited endurance and tend to dissolve on their own. They usually encompass only a manor or keep, perhaps with a small patch of land. Although the owner may not wield as much power as other lords, he or she controls the little prison nonetheless. However, even from such tenuous domains escape can be treacherous.

Powerful good or neutral creatures do not appear to trigger the creation of a domain. Every lord in Ravenloft is evil. Force of personality seems to be more important than raw physical power. A normal mortal of great hatred and greed can hold a large domain, while a weak-willed vampire may wander without one.

Dungeon Masters who design their own adventures for the RAVENLOFT campaign setting may choose to create new domains for their players. Remember that permanent new domains are quite rare, especially within the Core. Only a powerful character with great emotion or strength of will can rouse the land and make it grow. Lords are passionate creatures driven by regret, a lust for power, or an insatiable need for vengeance. As noted above, they may gain powers from the land, but they also suffer its curse.

## Destruction and War

The demiplane makes it difficult to destroy a lord, but it isn't impossible. When a lord is destroyed, the domain is in flux. If another powerful force resides in the domain, he or she may simply assume control. Usually this force must have been in residence for some time, attracting the demiplane's attention. In this way the domains have remained in the control of entire families, passed down through the generations. If no personality assumes control of a domain, however, the land may slowly dissolve into the Misty Border. Or it may warp to become part of a neighboring domain, enlarging the prison of another lord.

Once a domain is established, it cannot be altered or removed unless something destroys or defeats the lord in power. If a lowly little creature of evil establishes a tiny prison, the most powerful vampiress in Ravenloft is subject to its rules while inside its borders.

Of course, the vampiress might be able to kill or radically alter the little lord. If the demiplane responds to the vampiress and makes her a lord, the domain may be altered to suit her tastes. In many cases, a new domain simply would replace the one she has destroyed.

War is rare but not unknown in Ravenloft. Although lords cannot leave their domains, their minions are under no such restriction. A lord might choose to wage war to gain indirect control over greater territory, or just to cause trouble and misery. These wars meet with little success. A lord has great power, not only over his or her land, but often over its creatures and those who enter it. An invading army can quickly become soldiers for the domain they intended to assault. (The legions of Falkovnia that repeatedly assaulted Darkon are now among Azalin's minions, for example.)

Powerful, evil forces that are not lords are most likely to wage war in Ravenloft, but this type of war is usually fought with stealth and intrigue rather than military might. Such a rogue power could kill a reigning lord and take over his or her lands. Of course, the territory would respond to the new personality. They would probably change in nature and perhaps even in size, although they would not consume the territory of other domains.

## Escaping Ravenloft

Ravenloft is difficult if not impossible to escape. It was once believed that a few stable portals to the Prime Material Plane existed, but no reliable information confirming this theory has ever been documented. If there are such planar gates, they are as rare as kindness in a lich's heart. It is more likely that there are magical items that can transport creatures out of the demiplane, but such devices are sure to be hidden away by those who possess them, be they good or evil. In extremely rare cases, a greater power may remove creatures or characters from the Demiplane of Dread and guide them to a safer world, but that deliverance would probably be the result of a previous arrangement—even a greater power will not communicate with its minions once they step through the Mists.

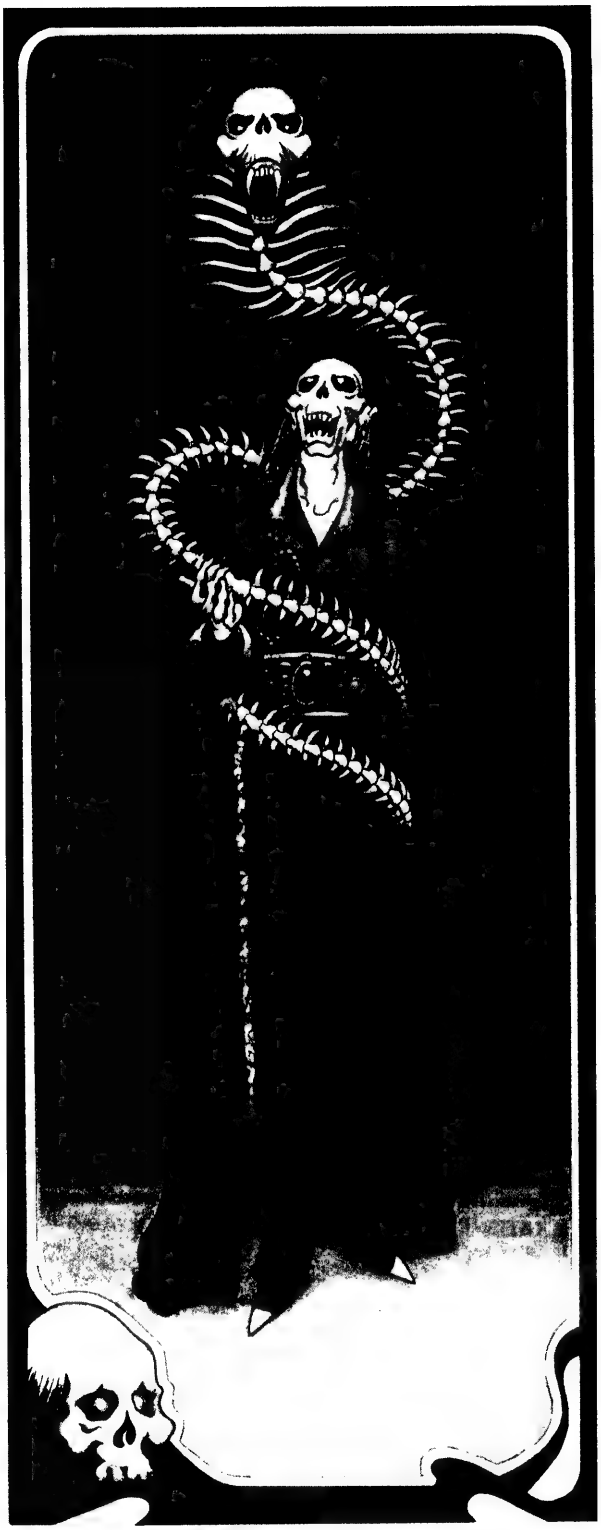
Hypothetically, any Ravenloft portal must be triggered by some event. When triggered, they can be expected to remain open for 2d6 rounds. During that time, they can transport anyone who steps through the portal to the Prime Material Plane. The exact destination may be uncertain, but travelers who find these gateways rarely care.

Some of the possible triggers that might open an exit from Ravenloft are a particular calendar date, a certain phase of the moon, a rare alignment of the stars, the destruction of a particular creature or magical item, the lifting of a curse, the will of a domain lord, the performance of a specific ritual, or the death of a domain lord. Other, more complicated triggers also may open a portal. Examples include historical events. For instance, a portal may open "when the Tower of Talus falls," "when the Muldar twins are reunited," or "when a daughter of Thanic walks the rainbow." Complex triggers also may combine several simple events. For example, a portal may open only when a character destroys a particular creature during a half moon.

When the Dungeon Master designs adventures, the trigger for an escape portal should fit into the story. While the adventuring party's main objective may be to find an exit from the land of the Mists, it should always be a side effect or result of other, more important events. Escaping Ravenloft can be a major part of some adventures, so the opening of a portal should be complex and interesting. A standard ploy is to design two portals for an adventure. The characters open the first by accident or coincidence, and watch in horror as the gateway closes before they can use it. Then they must find the second means of escape.

# 1: THE DEMIPLANE OF DREAD

Ideally, the notion of simply escaping the Demiplane of Dread should seem fairly hopeless. Adventurers who fixate upon a strategy of escape should be taunted and disappointed, for Ravenloft was made to create despair. Hope is nothing more than a lure within the land of the Mists, and success is for the extremely lucky and the precious few.



**Editor's Note:** *"What Are You Doing to My Campaign World?!"*

Doubtless, many Dungeon Masters have not incorporated the Grand Conjunction into their campaigns, and possibly the very domains where their adventuring parties presently battle evil no longer exist, according to this new edition.

That's okay!

Simply continue to use the old geography of Ravenloft and plan to introduce the Grand Conjunction whenever it fits into to the campaign, if ever. This boxed set has been created primarily to combine related rules resources and to update the domains and denizens that have had a strong impact upon the RAVENLOFT campaign setting in the five years since it was first developed. TSR, Inc. could have simply reprinted the original boxed set (for the fifth time), but we were sure that this new product would be more useful and more welcome.

If the Dungeon Master is not confident of his or her grasp of the rules, this new edition offers the perfect opportunity to learn them all from one source. For those seasoned masters of the macabre, the materials in this campaign setting box are easier to call upon when needed. But no matter what the status of the quest or the players, the land of the Mists is growing and changing, like all great campaign settings, and those who love to lurk in the shadows must be kept up to date.

# II: THE RESHAPING OF CHARACTERS

Characters of any class, race, and alignment can enter Ravenloft; the gates leading in are open to all. The land isn't blind to such individual traits—quite the contrary. The Mists, when wrapped around a group of wayfaring adventurers, seem to sense the very essence of each new guest. When that essence is displeasing, the land reshapes it, muting an offending ability here, redefining a power there. For most characters the effects are slight and temporary, lasting only as long as they stay in Ravenloft. For others, the changes are dramatic. These characters, too tempting for the land to ignore, may find themselves trapped in Ravenloft forever.

This chapter explains how the land of the Mists affects characters of a given class, or race.

## Warriors

Ravenloft's unnatural laws leave most warriors virtually untouched. The fighter suffers no changes at all to his or her abilities or personality. Paladins and rangers, however, do not escape the realm's forces so easily. . . .

### Paladins

By nature, paladins can detect evil within 60 feet if they focus their thoughts in a given direction, but the moment these proverbial "white knights" enter the Mists, that ability changes. In Ravenloft, *no one* can detect evil magically, either by spellcasting or by natural ability. Like any character who attempts to detect evil, paladins perceive no hint of evil, good, or neutrality. Instead, they learn only whether the target is "chaotic" or "not chaotic." Furthermore, the target is entitled to a saving throw vs. spell to avoid detection altogether.

The paladin's natural immunity to disease does not protect him or her from magical diseases in the land of the Mists. Lycanthropy, a mummy's touch, any affliction caused by a spell—all of these are considered magical. Likewise, the ability to cure disease applies only to an illness that originates from *natural* causes. The paladin's usual +2 bonus to saving throws vs. magical disease still applies, however.

The 10-foot aura that protects paladins from evil continues to surround them at all times, but this natural gift does not match the spell *protection from evil.* Rather, the paladin's aura imposes only a –1 penalty upon the attack rolls of evil creatures within its influence. In Ravenloft, evil beings can sense the aura and its exact source without entering it, and, all other things being equal, they will choose to engage in battle with someone other than the paladin. If the paladin is a logical target, however, intelligent creatures won't hesitate to attack him or her.

To the beasts of Ravenloft, paladins are like salt in a gaping wound—they're impossible to ignore. The instant one of these do-gooders steps into a domain, the lord of that domain senses it, for the paladin's glaring aura disturbs the fabric of the land itself. A darklord always knows the general position of every paladin in his or her domain. (As a rule of thumb, assume the lord comes within a mile of guessing the paladin's exact position.) If a paladin has drawn a holy sword, the lord's chance of locating him or her improves—in general, the lord can guess the location of the sword-brandishing paladin within 100 yards.

Besides clerics, paladins are the only characters who can turn undead. Both classes will discover that this ability changes in Ravenloft. See "Priests," (on page 26) and Table 1: Turning Undead (on page 27) for details.

## Rangers

Rangers enjoy a natural empathy with animals, and they are gifted handlers. This ability works as stated in the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* (*PHB*) and *Dungeon Master® Guide* (*DMG*), unless it conflicts with the laws of the domain. (The laws of any domain *always* take precedence over an individual player character's powers.) In some domains, animals are simply not trainable. In others, some or all of the animals obey only the lord. For example, all wolves in Barovia obey Strahd, so in this case the ranger cannot influence them. Of course, the ranger won't know this until he or she tests the skill. (And Strahd, who enjoys deception, may let it appear that the ranger *has* controlled a wolf, just to surprise the character later.) If the ranger has animals or enchanted creatures as followers, they may not stay with him or her. These creatures become subject to the laws of the domain in which they travel. For example, if a faithful wolf accompanies a ranger into Barovia, the wolf becomes Strahd's servant. Unless the rules state otherwise, however, the animal won't lose all memory of its loyalty to the ranger, and it won't attack the ranger or his or her friends (unless Strahd commands it to). Instead, the animal is likely to flee in order to resolve the conflicting instructions. Such an animal never strays far from the group, though. Both drawn to and repelled from its former master, the creature nervously shadows the group's every move. This can provide a wonderfully nerve-wracking diversion for the player characters: The adventurers, already on edge, hear rustling in the nearby brush at night. Is it a monster preparing to attack, or just the ranger's errant companion pet?

Occasionally, a ranger's animal follower does become pitted directly against him or her. Such an enchanted creature might harass villagers or torment other nonplayer

characters. In fact, evil powers may command the creature to attack the ranger's group directly. If the powers are intense, the animal will have no choice but to obey. When the ranger leaves the domain, the animal follower will attempt to accompany him or her—that is, if the animal still lives and has not received orders directly to the contrary. Once outside the domain, the creature reverts to its normal behavior. Recalling its disloyal actions, an intelligent creature may suffer pangs of guilt that leave it temporarily depressed, exceptionally submissive, or even mad.

## Wizards

A wizard's familiar does not automatically submit to the will of Ravenloft's lords. Unlike the ranger's followers, a familiar summoned or conjured by a mage is virtually a part of that mage. The two are empathically and physically linked, which helps protect the familiar from being control by an outside force.

For the most part, Ravenloft appears to ignore a wizard and his or her powers until he or she attempts to use them. Several spells and magical items have surprising new results. (See Chapters VI and VIII for specifics.) Wizards suffer no other ill effects when adventuring in Ravenloft . . . none to which they alone are vulnerable, that is.

## Priests

Turning undead is a priest's most prized ability, but it also is one of the most offensive to Ravenloft's dark powers. As a result, undead are more difficult to turn in the land of the Mists than in other worlds. For example, a 5-HD monster in Ravenloft is as tough to turn as a 6-HD monster elsewhere, and *no* attempt is automatically successful.

✣ Table 1: Turning Undead ✣

| Type or Level of Undead | Level of the Priest | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10–11 | 12–13 | 14+ |
| Skeleton or 1 HD | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1* |
| Zombie | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1* |
| Ghoul or 2 HD | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1* |
| Shadow or 3–4 HD | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* |
| Wight or 5 HD | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* |
| Ghast | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1* |
| Wraith or 6 HD | — | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Mummy or 7 HD | — | — | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| Spectre or 8 HD | — | — | — | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 | 4 |
| Vampire or 9 HD | — | — | — | — | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 | 7 |
| Ghost or 10 HD | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 | 10 |
| Lich or 11+ HD | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 | 13 |
| Special | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 20 | 19 | 16 |

* The undead creature is destroyed if it cannot flee at its current maximum rate or escape the priest's line of sight.

Table 1 (provided here and on the DM™ screen) is used resolve a turning attempt in Ravenloft. Rules for turning undead are otherwise the same as described in the *Player's Handbook*. Of course, these numbers can be modified by the *sinkhole of evil* effect.

## The 'Sinkhole of Evil' Effect

If the evil surrounding undead intensifies, the priest's ability to turn them wanes. Ravenloft's lands are riddled with sinkholes of evil: So foul are these places that priests suffer additional penalties, from –1 to –4, when turning undead. Also, even in a relatively calm area the presence of an evil master reduces the priest's efficacy. In most domains, when the lord is standing within 300 feet of his or her undead minions, priests suffer a –2 penalty in turning attempts. Pity the poor cleric who tries these powers when both the lord and land act against him or her, for the modifiers are cumulative!

Even without such penalties, Ravenloft's undead are often harder to turn than their Hit Dice would indicate. For example, Strahd's zombies are unusually fierce, befitting such a powerful master. Some monsters may even become unturnable by the priest. For example, if a 5th-level priest attempts to turn a mummy, he or she needs a die roll result of 20. An extra –2 modifier for a haunted house would make it impossible for the priest to turn that mummy.

Priests fit one of two general descriptions: those who worship a pantheon of gods but no god in particular, and those devoted to a specific deity. No matter which group they belong to, priests obtain spells through prayer—a power (or powers) answers those prayers and grants the spells. Unfortunately, Ravenloft has a way of corrupting or obscuring the lines of communication between priests and deities, so the results of any spell may be altered.

Priests devoted to a specific deity often enjoy special abilities. If such an ability mimics a spell that works differently in Ravenloft, then the ability works differently, too. (Follow the revised spell description. Otherwise, the Dungeon Master must determine in advance

what—if any—ill effects the priest may suffer.) Keep in mind that the laws of Ravenloft and its domains take precedence over the abilities of any player character.

**Optional Rule:** Like paladins, powerful lawful-good priests may trigger a kind of "alarm" that tells the lord of a domain their approximate location. In the paladin's case, his or her extreme alignment alerts the lord. The Dungeon Master may decide that a priest devoted to a lawful-good deity would stand out for the same reason.

## Rogues

The laws of Ravenloft leave rogues virtually untouched. Thieves suffer no alterations at all; their abilities remain as described in AD&D 2nd Edition rules. Bards suffer one minor restriction, however: They do not know "a little bit about everything" in Ravenloft. Unless they have lived and traveled through this hellish demiplane for more than a year, they have no reason to understand its people, places, or things. Of course, any spells a bard can cast are subject to the changes noted in this book.

## Psionicists

There are five cardinal rules used when deciding how a psionic power (as well as a spell or magical item, for that matter) works in Ravenloft. As always, these are subject to interpretation by the Dungeon Master.

- First, anything psionically summoned or otherwise transported from another plane into Ravenloft cannot go back automatically. Most outer-planar creatures are aware of their prisoner status immediately upon entering Ravenloft. Hence, they are likely to turn their powers upon the unmindful character who summoned them.
- Second, divination is weaker in the land of the Mists, favoring the secret ways of evil. Therefore, good and evil cannot be detected by psionics, although law and chaos can be determined. There is no sure way to determine if people or creatures are good or evil other than simply to judge them according to their actions (although that may lead to a fatal mistake—not all acts are what they seem at first).
- Third, using powers that are evil or for evil purposes requires a Ravenloft powers check. This applies to most necromantic functions and life-energy draining powers, but any psionic power that is used for evil can prompt the check at the Dungeon Master's discretion.
- Fourth, those powers that deal with the living dead or necromancy may actually work better in the Demiplane of Dread. This applies to things that create or assist the undead, not those that hinder or suppress them.
- Finally, the powers of the lord of a domain *always* take precedence over those of a psionicist.

## Recovering PSPs

The very nature of Ravenloft affects the psionicist at the most basic level. The mental atmosphere of the demiplane is so oppressive that characters recover psionic strength points (PSPs) at a far slower rate than they would elsewhere. At the Dungeon Master's discretion, this effect can vary from domain to domain, according to the relative mental strength of the lord. For example, in the domain of Barovia, psionicists might recover only 1 point per six full hours of sleep, and none whatsoever while they exert themselves. Even sitting and reading prevents recovery. Other domains where PSPs can be hard to reacquire are Bluetspur, Darkon, Dominia, and Valachan. Table 2 establishes the base level for recovering PSPs in Ravenloft.

**✣ Table 2: PSP Recovery Rates in Ravenloft ✣**

| Activity | Recovery Rate |
|---|---|
| Hard exertion, fighting | None |
| Walking, riding | 1 per 2 hours |
| Sitting, reading | 1 per hour |
| Rejuvenating*, sleeping | 2 per hour |

* Refers to the psionicist's proficiency.

## Nonhuman Races

The majority of Ravenloft's inhabitants are human—or at least they *look* human. Dwarves, halflings, and other nonhuman player-character races are rare. Even the lords tend to look, more or less, like specimens of *Homo sapiens*. Exceptions occur, though, and adventurers will inevitably stumble across a domain or two whose natives are not human.

Nonhuman characters usually attract the attention of the locals. In an extreme case, they may spur a lynch mob into action. Table 59: Encounter Reactions (in the *DMG*) lists a progression of possible responses, from "flight" to "friendly" to "hostile." When using this table, lower the reaction one category to reflect a nonhuman's negative influence on the natives (e.g., "threatening" becomes "hostile"). That means a reaction roll will never call for a friendly result when a nonhuman is present.

Friendly reactions won't always elude these nonhuman races, however. One who makes an effort to prove loyalty or harmlessness may eventually win the trust of Ravenloft natives. Once that trust is established, nonplayer characters can become friendly.

A nonhuman who tries to impress the locals may find those efforts backfiring. If he or she reveals great prowess, there's a 50% chance that nonplayer characters will react in fear, and the Dungeon Master may apply modifiers if appropriate. For example, if an elf mage casts a fireball at an abandoned house, the modifier would be severe. Most natives would fear him or her and logically assume that no home, especially their own, is safe.

If nonplayer-character reactions are based on Charisma, consider a nonhuman to be 3 points lower than normal. Of course, if a domain's description indicates no ill feelings toward nonhumans (Darkon is one such example), ignore this adjustment and remember that such rules apply only to initial reactions. Role-playing will always determine how nonplayer characters react in the long run.

A simple disguise can prevent most trouble. Ravenloft's inhabitants rarely see nonhumans and they don't expect to. More importantly, they don't *want* to, so unless they're given a good reason to believe otherwise, they'll prefer to assume that a person is human. But Ravenloft's locals also are naturally suspicious. The moment a nonhuman shakes their false perception of him or her, all bets are off.

Elf characters normally enjoy a 90% resistance to *sleep* and *charm* spells. Against one of Ravenloft's powerful natives, that resistance falters. The reduction depends on the spellcaster's skill, but a typical lord reduces an elf's resistance to just 50%, and the Dungeon Master should determine modifiers for other creatures according to this standard.

# III: FEAR, HORROR, AND MADNESS

Sitting around a gaming table, rolling dice and eating snacks, a player may easily say, "I wade through the pool of writhing zombie arms," but it would be quite another story to actually do it! The following rules help intrepid, pretzel-eating players determine how their characters would realistically react to the horrors of Ravenloft.

*It's important to realize that fear and horror checks are strictly optional game mechanics.* One of the most attractive aspects of the RAVENLOFT campaign setting is the rich and brooding atmosphere that lends itself to the best of role-playing. Certainly, cutting down zombies and ghosts is a change of pace from whacking orcs and trolls, but the real allure of the Demiplane of Dread is its invitation to experience both fear and horror through the convention of role-playing, and serious AD&D players savor this.

Fear and horror checks tend to intrude upon the game by calling upon the dice to determine a character's actions, and it would be ideal if there were no need for them. They're not designed to punish player characters, but to simulate a reasonable response to all those things that go bump in the night.

Therefore, players are *strongly* encouraged to throw themselves into their parts and to help the Dungeon Master establish the proper mood for a RAVENLOFT adventure. As long as they're willing to role-play their characters' reactions to the terrifying elements of the land of the Mists, then fear and horror checks are simply unnecessary.

Madness checks, on the other hand, are definitely required from time to time, and role-playing insanity can be a great deal of fun for highly dramatic players. (See the rules on madness, presented later in this chapter, for full details.)

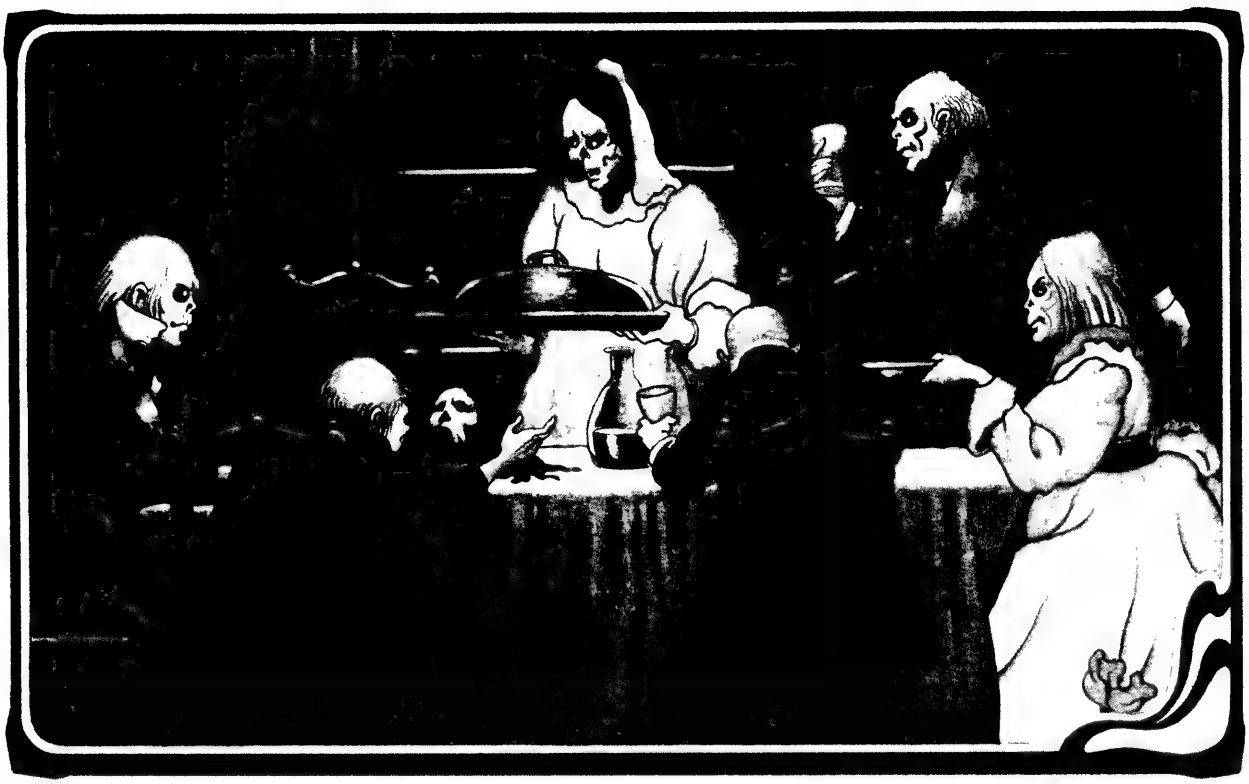
## Fear vs. Horror

When characters face things no mortal would ever want to face, two reactions commonly come into play: fear and horror. On the surface, the emotions seem similar. In both cases, the mind becomes just a little unhinged, and panic is likely. In RAVENLOFT game terms, however, fear and horror indicate two distinct reactions.

Fear is a response to an immediate threat, usually that of a monster or an enemy. The character faces some malignant force that clearly can and probably will harm him or her *now*. Horror, on the other hand, implies a certain amount of revulsion, anguish, and repugnance. Sometimes it comes from the realization of some horrid truth or possibility. Usually, it arises from a scene: The character sees something completely contrary to the common belief of what should occur in the world (even if experience dictates otherwise).

As an example, say a lad spies a maiden beside a pool in the woods, and he watches her remove a few articles of clothing as she prepares for a swim. Next, she removes her head. He faces no immediate threat, but he still may be horrified. The difference between one reaction and the other is subtle, but it is real. Perhaps the easiest way to distinguish between them in game terms is to say that fear is fairly temporary, but horror can have long-lasting effects.

Some situations evoke both fear and horror. For example, when a character sees a fellow adventurer lying limp and pale in the arms of a vampire, the scene may be horrifying. If the vampire looks up with a blood-smeared sneer, the character may fear the creature, too. When both a fear and a horror check are required, the player rolls the horror check first. If the roll fails, the fear check isn't necessary. If the character's horror check succeeds, the player then rolls a second saving throw for fear.



## Fear Checks

A character may be called upon to make a fear check when facing someone (or something) who threatens him or her with overwhelming power or strength. The victim must know, suspect, or believe that he or she is overmatched. The danger must be imminent, and the threat must be active. (A bottomless pit is deadly, but it usually doesn't call for a fear check.)

As a general rule, any of the following constitutes "overwhelming power or strength":

- The Hit Dice of the "threat" are more than double the total Hit Dice of the entire party adventurers confronting it.
- The maximum damage the creature(s) can inflict is enough to kill the hardiest character in the group in just one round. (In this case, "hardiest" means the character who has the most hit points.)
- Adventurers who can't cast spells do not have weapons of sufficient magical strength to harm the creature(s).

Of course, a character may only guess that one of these three conditions is true. If the characters don't even suspect they're overmatched, the Dungeon Master must decide whether a fear check is appropriate. What the characters *believe* is more important than what they *know*. If characters don't perceive a threat, they don't have to make a fear check, even if that threat is real. Likewise, a powerful illusion may trigger a fear check, even though the threat is false. In these cases, size and appearance of the monster are more important than its actual powers.

Dungeon Masters should use fear checks sparingly. Player characters are supposedly hardened adventurers. They should be able to face tough monsters without checking for fear, provided they believe they have a reasonable

chance of surviving. If the players express concern that virtually all hope of their characters' survival is lost, then call for fear checks. That doesn't mean the players are right; just that they feel this way.

Any item or spell that doesn't allow a creature (or threat) to harm a player character negates the need for a fear check. *Oil* and *armor of etherealness* are good examples. An *emotion* spell to instill courage, cast *before* an encounter, will negate the fear check and grant the character the attack bonuses described for that spell, too.

## How to Make a Fear Check

A fear check is a saving throw vs. paralyzation. This particular save applies because fear is an assault on the victim's mind, and it requires exceptional force of will to resist it. The "magical defense adjustment" for Wisdom automatically applies, accounting for the character's mental fortitude. The assault is not magical, however, so natural resistance to magic has no effect on emotional fear.

Spells and magical items can protect characters from fear, however, by giving them confidence in their ability to survive. Magic that offers partial protection, or protection that is not guaranteed, adds a +4 bonus to the character's saving throw. For example, *protection from evil, 10-foot radius* is not guaranteed, because the creature gets a saving throw of its own to negate the spell. Regardless of that creature's saving throw results, the character must still roll a fear check, but that includes the +4 bonus. A character wearing a *ring of fire resistance* when facing a fire-breathing hell hound also would gain a +4 bonus on the fear check. If an *emotion* spell is also used to inspire hope, that character receives the +2 bonus described for that spell *and* the +4 bonus.

The table below lists some common modifiers for fear checks, but the Dungeon Master is encouraged to apply others as befit the situation—some things are scarier than others. Any modifier that normally affects a save vs. paralyzation also affects a fear check.

**✣ Table 3: Fear Modifiers ✣**

| Situation | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Spell specifically helpful against encounter | +4 |
| Magical item specifically helpful against encounter | +4 |
| Friend or family endangered | +4 |
| Facing threat again on the same day | +1 |
| Know how a similar encounter was defeated | +2 |
| Defeated previously in a similar encounter | –2 |

## Failing a Fear Check

A character who fails a fear check is likely to drop whatever he or she is holding, just as when a *fear* spell affects him or her. The base

chance of this is 60% at 1st level (or at 1 HD). Each level above the 1st reduces the probability by 5%. Thus, at 10th level the character has only a 15% chance to drop items. The minimum chance is 10%, regardless of the character's level.

Whether or not objects are dropped, a character who fails a fear check is *fearstruck*: The survival instinct takes over, and he or she has no choice but to RUN AWAY! The victim will go anywhere, as long as it puts some distance between him or her and the threat. If the threatening creature (or creatures) wins the initiative, it receives one round of free attacks from behind. After that, it can continue to attack from behind if it can keep pace with its fearstruck victim. (A monster must have double its victim's movement rate to follow *and* attack in this instance.) To avoid a cartoon scene, the Dungeon Master might send repeatedly clobbered characters into a dead end—once cornered, even fearstruck characters can fight.

A character who cannot flee can turn and confront the threat, but it takes one round just to gather the wits. After that, the fearstruck character fights with a –2 penalty to all die rolls. Armor Class is decreased by 2 because defensive skill is diminished. Fearstruck wizards and priests have shaky hands, so spells have a 25% base chance, minus the spellcaster's level, to misfire.

## Recovering from Fear

Once the source of fear is removed or no longer poses a threat, the fearstruck character regains normal composure in 1d4 rounds. A priest or wizard may also alleviate fear with appropriate magic, such as *remove fear*, *forget*, and *emotion* spells. If the character still faces the threat, the *forget* spell allows a new fear check. Courage instilled by the *emotion* spell merely cancels the fear check results; it does not provide attack bonuses unless the wizard casts it again after relieving the fear.

## Horror Checks

As explained above, horror is a broader emotion than fear alone, involving revulsion, anguish, or repugnance as well as a sense of terror. A character may not have to make a fear check when faced with a formidable creature, especially if he or she has faced that kind (or what seems to be its kind) a hundred times before. But when the character sees the horrid effects the creature has inflicted upon friends and is suddenly struck with a sense of vulnerability, that's cause for a horror check.

Culture and upbringing may determine which scenes can horrify a character. For example, a mortician may not feel the same squeamishness over a dead body that others would, and a druid may be more sensitive to animal slaughter than a cattle rancher. Most inexperienced characters would be horrified by the mere sight of an undead creature. On the other hand, a character who repeatedly witnesses the same horrifying event eventually may become numb to its effects.

No hard, fast rules exist for determining horror. The Dungeon Master must decide which situations are threatening or awful enough to call for this reaction check. As always, take care to separate the players' intrepid responses from those their characters should normally feel. A 20th-century, popcorn-munching player can easily look a Dungeon Master in the eye and say, "So? What's so bad about that?" Good Dungeon Masters don't let player reactions sway them. They put themselves in the position of the player *character*, not the *player*.

## How to Make a Horror Check

Like fear, a horror check is a saving throw vs. paralyzation. The character's "magical defense adjustment" for Wisdom also applies. Table 4, below, lists common modifiers for a horror check, but the Dungeon Master is encouraged to apply others as befit the situation.

✣ Table 4: Horror Modifiers ✣

| Situation | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Character is lawful good | –1 |
| Character is of any evil alignment | +1 |
| Acquaintance is in the horror scene | –2 |
| Close friend or family member is in the horror scene | –4 |
| Closed quarters | –1 |
| Open area (room to run) | +1 |

## Failing a Horror Check

A character who fails a horror check is stunned for one round and cannot move, attack, or defend. Roll 1d6 to discover what happens to the character next. Results are shown in Table 5. In the descriptions of each result, "horror scene" refers to whatever caused the horror.

✣ Table 5: Failed Horror Check Results ✣

| Roll 1d6 | Result |
|---|---|
| 1 | Aversion |
| 2 | Revulsion |
| 3 | Obsession |
| 4 | Senseless rage |
| 5 | Mental shock |
| 6 | Fearstruck |

**Aversion:** The character cannot bear to look at the horror scene or stay in an enclosed space with that scene. In open spaces, he or she must stay at least 30 feet away. Each time these limits are willingly violated, the character is automatically fearstruck (see "Failing a Fear Check," above). A character who does not intentionally violate the limits imposed has one round to step away from the scene to avoid being fearstruck. For example, a player character who opens a door and sees a horrifying sight can close the door to avoid dropping his or her weapon and fleeing like a headless chicken.

Aversion usually lasts a month. A character who encounters a similar scene during this time must avoid it, too, or become fearstruck. The effects are automatic; the character does not make a new horror check for the subsequent scene.

**Revulsion:** This is a stronger version of the above result. The character cannot bear to view or be near anything that even suggests the horror scene. For example, a character who has witnessed a massacre may be repulsed by red wine or a cut of rare meat. Revulsion usually lasts a month as well.

**Obsession:** The horrifying experience plays itself in the character's mind over and over again. By day he or she continually talks about the event. By night he or she mutters still more and cannot sleep. If his or her lids close, it's only for a few moments at a time—not enough to provide rest or heal a point of damage. Each sleepless night reduces all combat rolls by –1 (cumulative to a maximum of –4). Priests and wizards suffer an additional handicap: On a day following a sleepless night, they cannot memorize spells.

A *sleep* spell offers limited relief. The sleeper doesn't suffer the combat penalties, but he or she cannot recover previously lost points either. However, a *sleep* spell does grant priests and wizards enough rest to memorize spells the next day.

An obsessed character can attempt a saving throw vs. paralyzation once per week to shake his or her obsession.

**Senseless rage:** The character is filled with rage at the experience and has only one desire: to smash and destroy the horror scene. He or she attacks anything that gets in the way. The enraged character gains a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls and can attack twice as often as normal. Even if the horror scene is destroyed, the enraged character continues to attack as if it were not so. After the third round of senseless rage, he or she can make a saving throw vs. paralyzation every other round (on rounds 4, 6, 8, etc.). A successful save ends the character's madness.

Predisposition to suffer bouts of rage

lingers for a month, like hot coals waiting to ignite. Whenever the character encounters a similar horror scene during that month, the save vs. paralyzation is repeated, with a –2 penalty. If the roll fails, the character goes berserk again (skip the 1d6 roll that determines horror results). If the roll succeeds, the rage is gone.

**Mental shock:** The character remains stunned for at least 3 rounds. After that, a saving throw vs. paralyzation can be attempted each round. If the first or second roll succeeds, the character regains composure, but if three consecutive saving throws (while in shock) are failed, the character slips into a state of deep shock. Those in deep shock can make another save to break free of it once per hour.

The effects of mental shock linger for a month. During that time, if the character confronts a similar horror scene, he or she must repeat the horror check with a –2 penalty. If the roll fails, the character slips into mental shock once again (skip the 1d6 roll that determines results).

**Fearstruck:** The character behaves just as if he or she had failed a fear check. For the next month, each time the character experiences something that closely resembles the horror scene, a new saving throw must be rolled, with a –2 penalty. If the check fails, the character is instantly fearstruck (see page 32).

## Recovering from Horror

The effects of a failed horror check usually fade in a month, but magic can speed the recovery. For example, a successful *forget* spell would revive a character quickly. An *emotion* spell for courage would do nothing, however—it negates fear, not horror. Repeated exposure to similar horror scenes might eventually numb the character to it, and eliminate the need for a horror check but the Dungeon Master must decide when this happens.

## Optional Fear and Horror Rules

Fear and horror checks should produce believable results. The Dungeon Master should feel free to bend or modify any rule above to meet that goal. Here are two examples:

- If the Dungeon Master thinks a horror scene is awful enough to stun characters, but is highly unlikely to send them screaming, then skip the 1d6 roll.
- "Replays" count. If a character has successfully faced an awful creature or scene before, then he or she should be less likely to falter when facing it again. Each successful fear or horror check for a particular encounter gives characters a +2 bonus vs. similar encounters later. (The bonuses are cumulative, but for ease of bookkeeping, they should last for one adventure only.)

## Madness Checks

A number of spells and magical items allow a character to glimpse into the minds of others, which might result in insanity. Wizards risk this when they cast *Bloodstone's frightful joining* (or *Strahd's frightful joining*), *contact other plane*, *ESP*, *know alignment*, and *wizard sight*, while priests may be unhinged by casting *commune*, *detect lie*, *divine inspiration*, *genius*, *group mind*, *idea*, *know alignment*, *mind read*, *rapport*, *speak with dead*, *thought broadcast*, and *thought capture*. Magical items that afford contact with other minds and carry the risk of inspiring madness include the *claw of magic stealing*, *crystal ball*, *crystal parrot*, *helm of telepathy*, *medallion of ESP*, *mirror of mental prowess*, and the *thought bottle*. And psionicists peer into the minds of others as a matter of course, so they are particularly in danger in the land of the Mists.

The minds of many creatures of the Mists operate on levels so appalling, so shocking, that to even glimpse their dark thoughts is to invite insanity. Dungeon Masters will have to decide when such contact has taken place between a player character and an evil being, but mental junctions with any of the following beings should almost certainly result in a madness check: any creature whose existence is fairly alien to a human or demihuman, like a beholder, morkoth, phycomid, or any intelligent plant; any psionic creature; any "alter-planar" creature (for any transplanar contact is likely to be intercepted by some agent of the dark powers); and, most certainly, any lord of a domain. In some cases the monster projects its mind into that of its victim, but usually it is the victim who unwittingly steps into the dark chasm.

Like fear and horror checks, the madness check is a saving throw vs. paralyzation. The Wisdom bonuses normally applied to saving throws vs. mental affects are also applied to the check, as a character's Wisdom may help deal with things too horrible to comprehend.

If the check fails, then roll on the following table for the effect. Note that these forms of "insanity" are not in any way intended to reflect exact medical definitions. They are designed *strictly* to provide interesting opportunities in role-playing.

**Table 6: Failed Madness Check Results**

| Roll 1d6 | Result |
|---|---|
| 1 | Schizophrenia |
| 2 | Severe depression |
| 3 | Delusions |
| 4 | Paranoia |
| 5 | Hallucinations |
| 6 | Amnesia |

**Schizophrenia:** In its classic form, this disease fragments the mind into several specialized personalities, each of which is capable of dealing with only a particular situation. Often, problems can arise when the wrong personality is present in the wrong circumstances. For example, a personality fragment tailored to mediate arguments might be present when a

fight breaks out with some monsters. Rather than stepping back and allowing an aggressive personality to come forward, the mediator persona might remain in control. The character would then try to mediate between the party and the monsters. The results would, of course, be disastrous.

Note that for a psionicist this disorder can be an especially dangerous problem: Each personality category retains only a portion of a character's psionic abilities—specifically, only a single discipline. Other than defense modes, the psionicist cannot use any science of devotion except those of the discipline specified by the current individual persona. (The recommended psionic discipline for each is shown in parentheses on the Schizophrenia Subtable, below.) Even within a discipline there is always a 50% chance that the personality cannot use each science, and each devotion has just a 75% chance of being available to the splintered mind. The Dungeon Master should roll for each science or devotion as the character attempts to use it. If the die result dictates that the controlling personality fragment doesn't have that power, no PSPs are lost, but the attempt constitutes the character's action for the round.

The Dungeon Master should write down sciences and devotions that each personality fragment can and cannot control as they are determined. It is also quite possible to have a personality that is restricted to a psionic discipline that the character doesn't know.

*In all cases, the psionicist still retains all defense modes and is capable of using them.*

For game purposes, the affected character's personality fragments into 12 distinct personae, each of which can surface at any time. A schizophrenic character has a 25% chance to spontaneously change personality during any emotionally charged or stressful situation. Otherwise, the character rolls upon rising from a restive state, to see which personality dominates for that day, as noted on the following table.

**✣ Schizophrenia Subtable ✣**

| Roll 1d12 | New Personality | Psionic discipline |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Aggressive, violent person | Psychokinetic |
| 2 | Passive, submissive victim | Psychoportive |
| 3 | Naive, friendly child | Psychometabolic |
| 4 | Angry, sulking person | Psychoportive |
| 5 | Kind, sympathetic person | Metapsionic |
| 6 | Aloof, snooty intellectual | Clairsentient |
| 7 | Artistic, creative person | Clairsentient |
| 8 | Compulsive liar | Metapsionic |
| 9 | Bratty, smart-mouthed child | Telepathic |
| 10 | Stubborn defender | Psychometabolic |
| 11 | Cheerful extrovert | Telepathic |
| 12 | Spiteful accuser | Psychokinetic |

Each personality will have its own name and gender, which need not match that of the character. With the Dungeon Master's specific approval, the player is free to think up his or her own, odd personalities. Always consider the mechanical ramifications of such creativity, but otherwise give inventive players free rein.

The player should remember that these are one-note personalities, usually incapable of reacting properly to any situation. Even the gentlest personality can be disruptive to the party. If the player is unable to successfully role-play the personality changes, the Dungeon Master may have to decide the character's actions at critical times in the adventure.

**Severe depression:** The character loses all will to take action and wants only to be left alone. In any given situation, the character is 50% likely to do nothing, regardless of how urgent the matter is, even if personal well-being is threatened.

If the character is physically attacked and suffers damage after failing the above die roll, he or she will fight back recklessly, refusing to break off the battle even in the face of insurmountable odds. This is not a heroic action; the character simply doesn't care what happens. Fear and horror checks are still possible, but the Dungeon Master will have to decide if the character's indifference merits modifiers to any specific die roll.

**Delusions:** The character believes him or herself to be something or someone that he or she is not. For the most part the character sees the world normally—it is him or herself that is interpreted differently. This is unlike schizophrenia because the character takes on a single new identity and maintains it constantly.

The character will usually decide to be someone important, or else something very unusual. For example, a character might decide that he or she is Elminster. It doesn't even matter if he or she isn't a wizard; the deluded person remains totally convinced that he or she is this famous character. Alternately, the lunatic might choose to become someone of local importance, like the consort of the town's ruler or a kindly priest of renown.

In some cases the character goes totally off the wall, mentally becoming a tree or a dog or some other odd creature. The character might decide to be a werewolf or the champion gladiator of the Gnawed Hand gnoll tribe. He or she might even decide to be a cape that hangs around the neck of the party's warrior.

This can be a role-playing extravaganza for some players, while for others it can be a highly debilitating experience. In the example of the cape for instance, the right player might have a wonderful time throwing him or herself upon a peg inside the door of an inn, or draping over the back of a chair instead of sitting in it. He or she might insist on riding piggyback on another character wherever they go, and so on. But combat, obviously, would present a greater challenge.

It's important to remember that the character's instinct for survival isn't sublimated by this madness. The cape-man might attempt to leap upon monsters' backs and slit their

throats, believing himself to be stabbing at them with his "clasp" (actually a knife), or he might protect his companions by claiming to be a *cloak of displacement.* If he must flee, he might say, "Now I'm a cape blowing in the wind!" The object is not to limit the actions of a character, but to force him or her to justify each act in terms of being the object of the delusion.

The player should be allowed to choose the form of the delusion, but the Dungeon Master can always veto any unreasonable suggestions. The best options are those that are relevant to the reason that the character went insane.

**Paranoia:** This is an unreasoning fear of other people. The character sees plots and schemes everywhere. Every action is meant to kill him or her, if not worse. In rare cases, the fears are extreme phobias of objects or animals. The phobias need to be large in scope, affecting daily life. For example, just being afraid of horses doesn't cut it here. The character should be afraid of horses, anybody who rides horses, and even any mention of a horse. The character might be *absolutely* convinced that a werehorse is out to get him or her. Furthermore, *anybody* might be the werehorse or an agent of this all-powerful creature, and the logic employed to support these suppositions can be as outlandish as the player has the imagination to construct.

Paranoid characters can be a tremendous amount of fun. For instance, the Dungeon Master can let them see actual dangers that the rest of the party members miss. When the paranoid character begins to shout about the horrible, evil things out there, the rest of the party is likely to dismiss the ranting. (Just because you're paranoid, that doesn't mean there isn't someone who's really out to get you!)

**Hallucinations:** The character sees him or herself normally, but sees the world differently. This is the exact opposite of delusions. How the character perceives people and things is usually centered around a theme. For example, the theme might be *bugs.* The character sees bugs everywhere—big ones, little ones, flying ones, burrowing ones. People and animals all have bug heads or fly wings, and so on.

In Ravenloft, this theme should somehow be relevant to the cause of his insanity. Peeking into the mind of a vampire might generate a theme of blood, for example. Everything the character drinks seems to be blood. People cry tears of blood. Bloodstains appear on walls and spell out horrible prophecies of doom.

The character not only sees the world through hallucinations, but also is incapable of dealing rationally with them. A normal person seeing blood everywhere would eventually become inured to the horrifying sights. Not so with the hallucinating character. The hallucinations *always* cause an extreme emotional response. He or she is frightened of them and possibly could become obsessed and entranced with them. The character might hear them speaking, demanding acts that he or she is powerless to resist.

**Amnesia:** This is a permanent (until cured) personality change. The character is no longer the same person, suffering even a change in alignment. The character remembers nothing of his or her previous life, doesn't know the other members of the adventuring party, and isn't likely to trust them for a while.

One of the few benefits of this disorder is that the results of all previous failed horror checks, fear checks, and madness checks are eliminated. Even if memory is restored, these events hold no emotional weight and do not affect the character in the future.

Roll twice on the following subtable; once for the good/evil portion of the character's new alignment, and once for the chaos/law portion. Reroll each portion until both are different from the character's current alignment.

| Roll 1d6 | Good/Evil | Chaos/Law |
|---|---|---|
| 1–3 | Evil | Chaotic |
| 4 | Neutral | Neutral |
| 5–6 | Good | Lawful |

Once the new alignment is chosen, the character should be played as having a new personality as well. If the player is having some trouble coming up with a new personality, try rolling on the Schizophrenia Subtable. It may take a few rolls to come up with a personality that doesn't contradict the alignment. In this case, the final result is the *tone* of the character's personality. Unlike the schizophrenia, he or she is fully functional and quite rational—the character just isn't who he or she used to be.

An amnesiac loses all experience points temporarily and becomes, in essence, a 0-level character. He or she cannot use any character class abilities (spellcasting, thief skills, etc.). Since this is merely a change of viewpoint and not a physical change, hit points and ability scores remain unchanged. Also, enough of the character's true mind remains that "nonknowledge" proficiencies, including weapon proficiencies, are retained.

## Inside an Insane Mind

There is danger for a psionicist or spellcaster who descends into the mind of someone driven insane by the horrors of Ravenloft. Any spell, science, or devotion that opens up the seething cauldron of mental chaos forces the helpful character to roll his or her own madness check. However, psionicists enjoy a + 2 bonus on the roll, due to their experience at delving into the minds of others.

The check is not necessary when reading surface thoughts or merely making psionic contact. It applies only when the character delves into the depths of an insane person's mind, so spells like *ESP* are quite safe. However, *mind read* spells and others which probe deeper are cause for a madness check.

## Recovering from Madness

There are several ways that characters can recover from insanity. The most obvious is by having a psionicist use the psychic surgery science. If successful, the insanity is cured. (Unfortunately, since psionicists are the most likely characters to check for madness, there is a strong possibility that the party's only psionicist is the character who is mad.) However, there is a small amount of danger in performing psychic surgery on anyone driven insane: If a 20 is rolled when using the science, the normal consequences apply, the surgeon must make a madness check, and the patient remains insane. The science can be used repeatedly, with the same chances for failure.

There is precious little that magic can do to cure insanity. It seems that wizards and priests have had no interest in the ailments of the mind. However, two priest spells are able to cure mental illness: *heal* and *restoration*. (The *restoration* spell must be cast with the specific intention of restoring the character's mind.) In the case of amnesia, curing the madness will restore both experience points and levels.

There is also a long, mundane road to recovery for characters who don't have any of the above options available to them. The character can be placed in the care of someone capable of performing or casting *hypnosis*. Up to twice a week, the patient is hypnotized and the "therapist" spends an hour working with the now-pliant mind. At the end of the hour, the patient rolls a saving throw vs. paralyzation. If the saving throw fails, the session was successful. (The patient cannot voluntarily fail the saving throw.) The patient needs as many successful sessions as he or she has points of Intelligence to be cured. It helps if the hypnotist is able to cast a spell or use a psionic ability that allows the reading of the patient's mind or emotional state: The patient gets a –2 penalty to the saving throw for the session in that case, due to the additional insight the hypnotist gains.

A final option for curing madness is to discontinue adventuring for one month, during which time the affected character must avoid stress at all costs. At the end of the month, the character may reroll the check. Failure means another month is required before another save may be attempted. Success removes madness, but subsequent related saving throws are to be rolled with a –4 penalty, decreasing by 1 (i.e., –3, –2, –1) for each month that the character goes without failing a madness check.

## Sanitariums

There are a few sanitariums scattered across the domains of Ravenloft, Dementlieu, and Mordent. (Of course, there is also Dr. Dominiani's asylum in Dominia, but his treatment is a bit . . . *radical*.) Most of these places claim to be devoted to curing insanity. They can show the characters room after room of demented people, driven mad by a variety of experiences in the Demiplane of Dread. They also have doctors on staff that they claim are trained to deal with such patients through hypnosis and other, more mundane methods. The quality of such treatment varies from sanitarium to sanitarium.

The Dungeon Master can roll 1d8 and subtract 3 to determine the quality of the sanitarium—the resulting number is –2 to +5. This is the modifier added to the saving throw to determine if a session was successful. Remember that a positive number is bad, increasing the chance of a successful saving throw, which is the opposite of the desired result in this case. Obviously, most Ravenloft sanitariums are not so good at curing madness. Because of the large number of patients, there is only one session per week per victim.

Almost all sanitariums charge for their services. Typical fees to treat a patient are 2d10 + 90 gold pieces a month. Any month that the sanitarium is not paid, the patient receives no treatment.

# IV: THE RAVENLOFT POWERS CHECK

Most characters travel through Ravenloft virtually unnoticed, but player characters with an exceptionally strong will or alignment actually attract the land's attention, particularly those with the convictions of a paladin. When the land does notice a character, his or her goodness inflames it. On the other hand, evil is a substance upon which Ravenloft quietly feeds, and evil characters face the greatest danger in Ravenloft. If a player character's actions are consistently evil—his or her personality void of redeeming features—then the land responds. This chapter explains how.

Ravenloft not only responds to evil, it appears to nurture it, because when that evil is strong, the land can trap it forever. This is a very real possibility for a player character. The AD&D game is designed for heroes, yet despite the best intentions of the Dungeon Master and all guidelines to the contrary, some people insist on playing the opposite. These players, if not careful, may find their characters wrested from their control.

If an act of evil gains the attention of the dark powers, their response is twofold. On one hand, they reward the evildoer with some measure of increased power—perhaps an improved sense or unique ability that sets him or her above all peers. On the other hand, they punish the act of evil by making some change in the individual that reflects both the heinous act and the nature of the reward.

As time goes by and more evil deeds are added to the first, the rewards and penalties handed out by the dark powers become greater and greater. In the end, even someone who began life as a pure and innocent babe may find him or herself transformed into a creature of absolute darkness and horror, ruling a domain.

## The Fall from Innocence

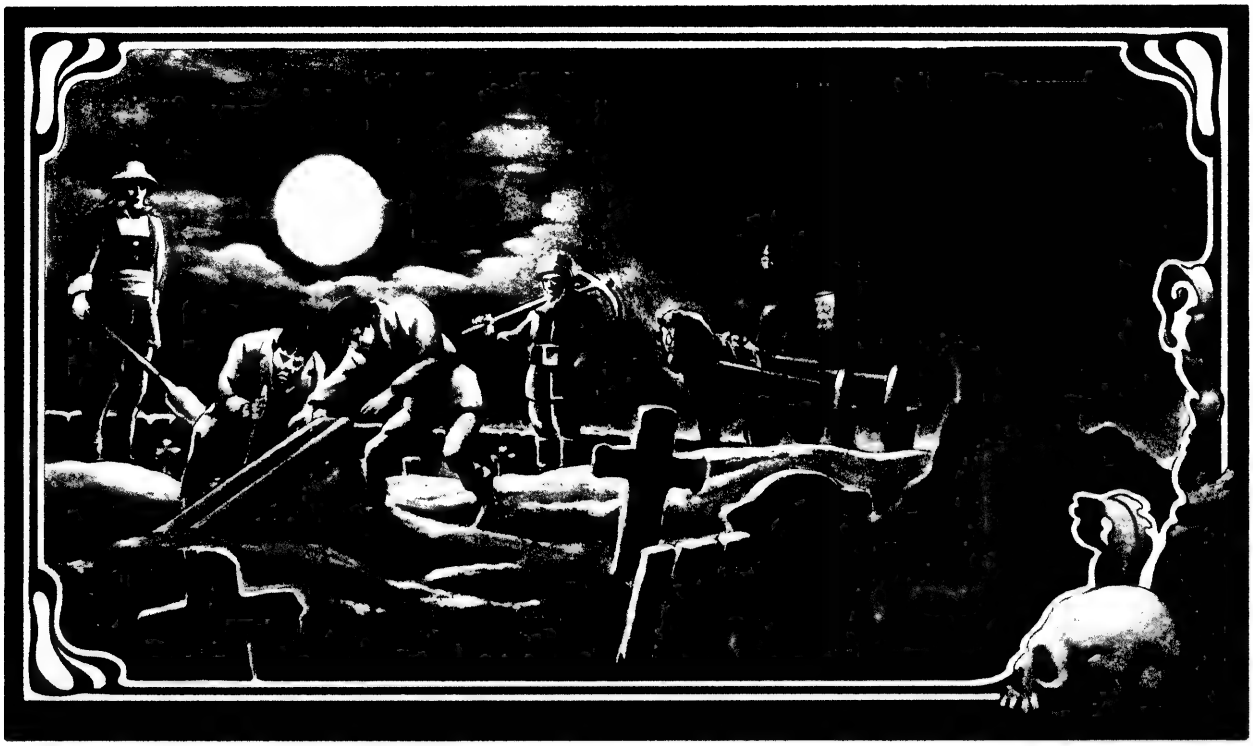
The key to all elements in a Ravenloft adventure, not just powers checks, is a sense of poetic justice. This is clearly demonstrated by all of the darklords, who suffer curses that reflect the crimes they committed.

In Barovia, Strahd lives forever alone but is eternally haunted by promise of an undying love that he can never claim—his beloved Tatyana continues to reincarnate and slip through his grasp. The feral Captain Monette, lord of L'ile de la Tempete (see the *Darklords* accessory [9331]), longs for nothing but to travel the seas of the world, yet he finds himself master of an island surrounded by oceans he can never explore. This macabre reflection is a vital part of the atmosphere of Ravenloft.

Just as a curse should reflect the crime it punishes, a the result of a failed powers check should relate to the crime that prompted it. For example, a thief who steals from a church poor box and then fails a powers check might find that he or she has acquired some aspects of a leech—the character could discover that he or she can climb walls with magnificent efficiency, but will also leave a trail of slime wherever he or she treads. If the rogue makes no effort to halt the descent into darkness, he or she will gradually become more and more like the parasitic creature. Eventually the rogue might even transform utterly into a giant leech, or maybe become the first of a new breed of lycanthropes. If the corruption is absolute, the thief might even garner his or her own, swampy domain.

A number of possible rewards and punishments for drawing the attention of the dark powers are listed on Table 8: Failed Powers Checks Results (see page 52), but the best consequences of a failed check depend upon the situation, the character, and the Dungeon Master's own diabolical imagination.

# IV: THE RAVENLOFT POWERS CHECK



## When to Call for a Ravenloft Powers Check

For the purposes of powers checks, not all acts that might strictly be defined as evil need be considered. For example, the act of killing is rightly classed as evil by most cultures, but the circumstances of the act must be pondered in the RAVENLOFT campaign setting. Was it murder in the heat of passion? Was the death accidental or caused by negligence? Was the act committed in self-defense or in the pursuit of a greater good? In all these cases, no powers check would be called for.

*A powers check is made only when a deliberate, calculated act of evil is committed.* Of course, the more foul the act, the more likely it is to draw the attention of the dark powers and cause them to reward/punish the person committing it. (See Table 7: Recommended Powers Checks on page 46.)

## Shades of Gray

Some actions can appear evil until one examines the facts that motivated them. Other acts don't seem overtly evil, but for the same reasons they might force a character to make a powers check. As with all things, this is subject to a Dungeon Master's interpretation.

Consider a group of heroes that comes across a long-abandoned temple in the midst of the foul swamps of Souragne. The temple is clearly unused and has been for many decades, but it appears to have been dedicated to a good deity when it was in service. Exploring this temple might not be an evil act, but removing its treasures (especially if this defiles the temple) might well be.

In another case, the same group of adventurers might be trapped in the sandy wastes of Har'Akir when they stumble upon an ancient tomb. Would the act of removing the treasures from this crypt be evil? In the eyes of

the natives, there is no greater crime than that of grave robbing, but to those of another culture there might be no great sin in this.

There are two general guidelines for the resolution of such cultural or moral conflicts. The first assumes that an act is not evil unless the individual committing it sees it as such. Thus, a man "committed to the advancement of science" through grave robbing would not be subject to the scrutiny of the dark powers. The second consideration dictates that the cultural norms of a given domain define good and evil, and that all acts and the creatures who perform them can or must be judged according to those standards. Thus, in Har'Akir any grave looting is worthy of a powers check. The decision as to which guideline to follow is left to the Dungeon Master. The former is good for forcing players to act in keeping with their roles and maintain a feeling of conscience in the game. The latter is better for presenting local taboos and superstitions in the context of an adventure.

Another common exception to a required powers checks is a case where the end is believed to justify the means. For example, an evil necromancer is about to transform a young woman into an undead ghoul. In order to rescue her, a band of heroes is forced to fight and kill several charmed guards that protect the necromancer's keep. Killing these unwitting servants of darkness might well be considered evil, especially if no attempt was made to subdue or avoid fighting them. If there was no time for such considerations, however, or if the heroes were unaware that the guards had not willingly chosen to follow the necromancer's evil ways, then no check would be required. If, on the other hand, a somewhat more difficult means of reaching the wizard was discarded because it was easier to slaughter his underlings, then a check is certainly called for. Such callous disregard for life has been the first step on many a ruinous journey.

It is important that the Dungeon Master not create situations where player characters have no choice but to do evil. No one enjoys being put in a no-win situation, especially in something as personal as a role-playing game. If the players are put in a position that forces them to take some action which would normally be considered evil, no powers check is made.

It is impossible to be forced or tricked into an evil act that merits a powers check. The primary purpose of this game mechanic is to dissuade player characters from committing acts of evil. Therefore, an act that prompts a powers check must be premeditated and undertaken with clear understanding of its nature.

## Player Character or Nonplayer Character? That Is the Question

For player characters, a Ravenloft powers check can be an important and dramatic part of the adventure. A character who has failed one or two checks is faced with the looming possibility of becoming something dark and sinister. If this happens, the character is lost and becomes an nonplayer character. Faced with that possibility, many players will seek redemption (see page 50) and refrain from any action that is remotely evil.

For nonplayer characters, however, the main thrust of a powers check—to promote role-playing—is lost. For this reason, it is advised that Dungeon Masters use powers checks only for player characters. Randomness has no place in the life of nonplayer characters. They commit evil acts because the Dungeon Master wants them to. If the Dungeon Master wants the players to witness the effects of a failed powers check in a nonplayer character, that's fine, but the dice would not normally dictate when this happens. Nothing serves to better drive home a point like this than watching someone important to the party, such as a valuable henchman, slowly decay into a creature of darkness. If in the end the servant turns on his or her master and former companions, the shock is complete. Evil deeds have destroyed

this hapless person, and the player characters are warned not to follow in his or her footsteps. To sum up, Dungeon Masters should simply ignore this mechanic in the case of nonplayer characters.

## Making a Ravenloft Powers Check

The normal Ravenloft powers check is a percentile roll, and the higher the result, the more likely the dark powers are to respond. For example, if the result is 00, the demiplane's strange powers automatically respond.

It is up to the Dungeon Master to decide upon the exact chance, but the particular action of the player character will set the parameters. Powers checks are not designed to occur easily—the threat of them is at least as important as the promise. Except in the case of acts of ultimate darkness (see page 49), the chance that the dark powers will respond to an evil deed is usually around 5% (a result of 96 or higher on percentile dice). In general, the chance should not exceed 10%.

Some Dungeon Masters have a hard time assigning a value to the powers check. To be sure, the difference between 1% and 10% is subtle and, in game terms, the risk of failure is fairly minor. Still, even a 1% chance will catch up with an evil character eventually, and a 10% chance ought to be enough to worry even the most callous of players.

In order to help the Dungeon Master arrive at a proper figure, Table 7: Recommended Powers Checks has been generated (see page 46), which lists various categories of evil acts. Each of them is assigned a numeric value between 1 and 10, indicating the chances of a powers check that are associated with such a deed.

These are, of course, just guidelines. Anyone who commits an evil act with unusual cruelty, or who is especially malicious, should find the chance of failure increased by 1 or 2 percentage points.

The terms employed in the table are briefly defined below. Note that each category is cross-referenced against the type of person or persons suffering from the act.

### Crimes or Acts of Violence

Criminal and violent acts are perhaps the most common basis for the Ravenloft powers check. It would be impossible to include every form of incursion, but the list provided is broad enough to interpret most related cases.

**Assault, unprovoked:** An unprovoked assault is any attack upon another person that is performed out of malice or spite. This includes minor physical violence, like beatings or brawls and some violent crimes (mugging, for instance). It assumes that the victim is not permanently harmed by the attack and will recover sooner or later. This is the sort of thing that marks a bully.

**Assault, grievous:** This is more brutal than the former category, and it assumes that some lasting harm has been done to the victim. It includes many of the more severe violent crimes, such as attempted murder.

**Betrayal, major:** This implies the betrayal of a person's trust, or taking actions that are against their best interest. Major betrayal includes such vile deeds as luring someone to a vampire's lair in exchange for the fiend's promise not to harm you or your family. In general, if it leads to personal harm or death, it's a major betrayal.

**Betrayal, minor:** Although less severe than the previous category, actions of this type cannot be discounted. Deeds that lead to embarrassment or a change in lifestyle fall into this category.

**Extortion:** This covers areas such as blackmail, where the threat of physical violence or loss is used to force someone else to perform an undesirable task, violate a law, or refrain from reporting a criminal or violent act.

✣ Table 7: Recommended Powers Checks ✣

| Crimes or Acts of Violence | Evil NPCs or Monsters | Neutral NPCs or Strangers | Good NPCs or Friends | PCs, Family, or Innocents |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assault, unprovoked | * | 1% | 2% | 3% |
| Assault, grievous | 1% | 2% | 4% | 6% |
| Betrayal, major | 1% | 3% | 6% | 9% |
| Betrayal, minor | * | 1% | 3% | 6% |
| Extortion | * | 2% | 5% | 8% |
| Lying | * | * | * | 1% |
| Murder, brutal | 3% | 6% | 10% | † |
| Murder, premeditated | 2% | 3% | 6% | 10% |
| Theft, grave robbing | * | 1% | 5% | 7% |
| Theft, major | * | 1% | 4% | 7% |
| Theft, minor | * | * | 3% | 6% |
| Threat of violence | * | * | 1% | 2% |
| Torture, routine | 4% | 7% | † | † |
| Torture, sadistic | 10% | † | † | † |

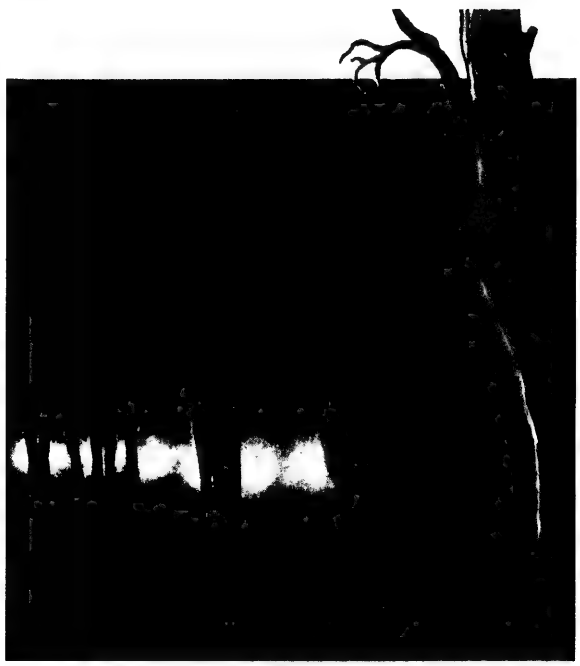
| Unholy Acts | Evil Faith | Neutral Faith | Good Faith | Own Faith |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Breaking a tenet | * | 1% | 2% | 5% |
| Breaking an oath | * | 2% | 5% | 10% |
| Breaking a vow | * | 5% | 10% | † |
| Desecration | * | 4% | 8% | † |

**Other Evil Acts**

| | |
|---|---|
| Casting an evil spell | 1% chance per level of spell, but only with spells noted as requiring a powers check upon use |
| Laying a curse | 2% chance for embarrassing curses; 4% for frustrating; 8% for troublesome; 16% for dangerous; 32% for lethal |

* Too minor or "gray" to require a powers check.

† These deeds exceed the range of normal powers checks. The Dungeon Master should refer to "Acts of Ultimate Darkness" (page 49).



**Lying:** This covers all manner of intentional deceit, even the simple omission of facts. However, unless the lie has some direct negative effect on the person hearing (and believing it), no powers check is made. This is, all things considered, a very minor indiscretion in the darkness that is Ravenloft.

**Murder, brutal:** In order to qualify as brutal, a murder must cause undue suffering or horror on the part of the victim. Often, this is a very fine judgment call. For example, poisoning someone would not normally fall into this category. However, if the toxin caused great pain and suffering before it brought death, the Dungeon Master might decide that it did fall into this class. Unusually brutal killings might well fall under the heading of torture, at the DM's discretion.

**Murder, premeditated:** This includes any killing that is done in the name of personal gain and vengeance, as long as the victim is simply done away with and not made to suffer.

**Theft, grave robbing:** This type of theft is so unusual in most cultures that it merits its own category. As a rule, it includes looting fallen bodies in war or removing any treasure from a place of burial. It also includes acts such as slipping a ring from the finger of a dead woman just before she is placed in her coffin. In some cultures, this crime is far worse. In Har'Akir, for example, grave robbing might fall under the category of desecrating a holy place.

**Theft, major:** This covers any type of theft that results in personal hardship for the victim. In general, the theft must force a person to change his or her life style in order to fall into this category.

**Theft, minor:** Any theft that does not fall into the previous category, such as picking a pocket or cutting a purse, is placed under this heading.

**Threat of violence:** This is a fairly minor offense in most cases. It generally involves any threatening gesture or statement that causes another individual to fear for his or her well being. It does not include mundane

threats like those made by a drill sergeant or a member of the watch attempting to extract information from a reluctant prisoner. By the same token, warnings to refrain from some course of action ("Don't move your hands, necromancer, or I'll kill you!") don't count. In other words, the threat must be convincing and intimidating.

**Torture, routine:** Almost without a doubt, this is among the most heinous and evil things that one can inflict upon another. Intentionally causing physical or mental suffering is an act abhorred by all but the most depraved cultures. This type of torture, the less severe of the two, includes all such acts that might serve some purpose, like torturing a prisoner to learn who is his or her master. Nevertheless, even with the best of intentions, this is a thoroughly reprehensible act.

**Torture, sadistic:** This vile category includes all manner of tortures inflicted for the simple joy of causing pain. It is so evil an act that every example of it fairly begs for the attention of the dark powers.

## Unholy Acts

These are deeds committed against a church or other religious body. This is especially important to those who are making use of *The Complete Priest's Handbook*, or to groups of adventurers that include paladins or priests. The various evil acts are listed and cross referenced with the alignment of the faith that has been offended.

These powers checks are generally reserved for violations of which a character is aware. For example, a paladin in the service of Thor, who does not bow when entering a temple sacred to Ra, has committed no crime. Of course, if he or she has pledged to respect the followers and symbols of the church of Ra, that is another matter.

**Breaking a tenet:** All faiths have normal rules and regulations that each and every one of their followers are expected to obey. For example, a god of the harvest might require that 10% of every harvest be burned in homage for help in growing the crop. If a follower of the deity intentionally sacrifices less than the full share, he or she has violated one of the faith's tenets. Generally, these transgression are minor and don't require a powers check unless done repeatedly or with malicious intent.

**Breaking an oath:** This is a more serious violation than the previous one. It requires that the act be in violation of some promise made under the auspices of the church. For example, a cleric who has sworn never to use an edged weapon finds himself in mortal combat with an evil creature. Instead of using his own mace, he picks up the magical *flame tongue* blade of a fallen comrade and cuts the beast down. His reasons might seem fairly rational: He might have felt that it would take too long to kill the monster with his own, lesser weapon. His oath, however, requires him to always forsake blades and their kin, and a powers check is in order.

**Breaking a vow:** This is the most serious violation that one can commit against a deity. This category includes transgressions against one's promises made under the auspices of the power. In this case, the act is so objectionable that it flies in the face of everything the faith stands for, and it violates a duty to the ultimate power, not just to the church and its agents. A paladin who betrays the trust of his or her church by watching as one of its temples is sacked might well find him or herself in this level of jeopardy.

**Desecration:** This is a broad category that covers any manner of destruction or defilement of sacred places or objects. Thus, it might include anything from destroying an important holy symbol to doing evil in a temple of goodness. In order for an act to qualify as desecration, the object or place must be made offensive to the deity, so that any blessings formerly bestowed upon it are withdrawn.

## Other Evil Acts

Of course, these lists do not include every conceivable act of evil that a character might perpetrate, but they do provide a broad overview of various levels of Ravenloft powers checks and the types of deeds they are intended to punish. There are countless other actions that might require characters to make a powers check, but two of the more common ones are presented here.

**Casting an evil spell:** There are numerous spells that require the caster to make a powers check upon casting them; these are detailed in Chapter VI. When such a spell is employed, the percentage chance of drawing the attention of the dark powers is equal to 1% per level of the spell employed. Thus, the casting of an *energy drain* spell requires a 9% check, while casting *chill touch* calls for only a 1% check. Of course, using the spell to commit any of the acts on Table 7: Recommended Powers Checks will increase the chance.

**Laying a curse:** As explained in Chapter V, anyone laying a curse must roll a Ravenloft powers check. The chance of failure is 2% for an "embarrassing" curse, and an additional 2% is added for each level beyond "embarrassing." Thus, a "lethal" curse requires a 10% check.

## Acts of Ultimate Darkness

In some cases, a character will commit an act so vile that a powers check seems to be an insufficient response. These deeds are termed "acts of ultimate darkness," and they have a *much* greater chance of drawing the attention of Ravenloft's dark powers.

What sorts of things fall into this category? A perfect example of such an act would be Strahd's murder of his own brother in an attempt to possess his brother's betrothed. This crime involved betraying and murdering his own kin, driving an innocent woman to suicide, and making vows to forces darker than any mortal was ever meant to treat with. Clearly, this act merits a powers check well beyond the normal maximum of 10%.

When a player character commits an act of ultimate darkness, the Dungeon Master is free to assign any chance of failure to the powers check, be it 25%, 50%, or even 100%. In the latter case, the Dungeon Master has seen a player character attempt an action so vile that he or she cannot help but punish it. When this happens, automatic failure of a powers check is a perfectly acceptable response.

Clearly, Strahd von Zarovich's acts on the night of Ravenloft's inception fell into this category.

## Role-playing the Powers Check

If a player is told to "roll a 5% powers check," he or she is going to be aware that a game mechanic is being used to regulate the actions of his or her character. This, of course, goes against all efforts to establish the mood, atmosphere, and style of a RAVENLOFT game session. To avoid that, the Dungeon Master is advised to dramatize the powers check. In this way, the routine exercise of a game mechanic is transformed into a pivotal juncture in the career of the character.

For example, suppose that a paladin has fled from a battle, leaving his companions to face certain death at the hands of a deadly minion of evil. Obviously, if the paladin fled because of a spell or special ability of the fiend, then no powers check is required. If, however, the character abandoned his companion out of something so base as cowardice or a desire for self-preservation, a check might be required. If we assume that the act counts as major betrayal of another player character, then a 9% powers check is required. However, rather than simply telling the player to roll percentile dice, the Dungeon Master tells him that his character begins to feel a strange sensation in the air around him as he flees from the battle:

*Cold sweat seeps through your skin and coats you in a clammy layer that leeches the heat from your body. At first, you attribute the chill to the night air, but then you come to realize that it is more than that: This chill runs beneath your skin. It feels as though your blood has turned to ice. You have the distinct impression that something very dark is watching you, even calling you, though you hear nothing.*

At this point, the Dungeon Master can ask the player to roll percentile dice without saying directly that it is a powers check. If the check is successful (91 or lower in the above example), then the eye of the dark powers moves on and the strange feeling passes, leaving the character unchanged but aware that something macabre has happened. If the check is failed (92 or higher), the Dungeon Master can maintain the mood by detailing that first step on the paladin's road to disaster:

*Gradually, as you continue to distance yourself from the battle, you become more and more aware that something unnatural has focused its attention on you. The chill that you feel is building into a surge of frostbite that aches in the marrow of your bones. Is it cruel laughter you hear, or was that simply the wind playing tricks upon your guilty conscience?*

Even at this point the mood of the check can still be destroyed by simply telling the player what changes have come over his character, so the Dungeon Master should be prepared to deliver judgment in a similar style. Suppose the Dungeon Master feels the dark powers have decided to reward/punish the paladin's act of cowardice with a gradual transformation into a hyena, a creature considered (rightly or wrongly) to be a lowly and timid scavenger. Instead of simply saying, "Your character now has a movement rate of 15 when he runs on all fours," the Dungeon Master can introduce this as an element of play:

*As the last echoes of the unreal laughter fade away, you realize that you have been moving through the woods at great speed. Trees race past you, and the moonlight shining down through their branches flickers and flashes across your body. The crisp air blowing past your face seems to have brought your senses to life as they have never been before. Much to your surprise, you find that you have taken to running on all fours like a wolf or dog.*

While this might excite the player and cause him to believe that his character has gained some great inner power, he will soon learn that his character cannot stand to eat fresh meat. Imagine the shock he feels when he learns that his paladin is now utterly unable to eat anything that has not begun to rot.

By keeping such elements in mind during game play, the Dungeon Master can effectively use the unusual rules and mechanics that make Ravenloft so different and exciting.

## Redemption

Once the road to evil is chosen, it is a difficult path to turn away from. The corruption of body and soul, like the decay of an apple, cannot easily be halted. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to reverse this process.

Even so, that does not mean that all hope of recovery is lost for those who recognize that they have begun to slip into a pattern of evil. In the early stages of corruption, it is possible to not only halt the metamorphosis, but also to reverse it. If steps to this end are taken quickly, then a restoration to grace is possible, though difficult. Once the spirit has become too tainted with evil, however, nothing can be done.

The stages of evil (see below) can be reversed with effort. As a general rule, the character must face again the situation that brought about his or her moral failings, and this time he or she must stay upon the path of righteousness. Those who resist the course that

evil dictates have a chance to break free of the grasping talons of the dark powers. The number of trials that must be passed in succession is equal to the percentage chance of failure assigned to the last failed powers check. After these temptations have been resisted, a second powers check is rolled, with the chance of failure the same as the first. If the roll is successful, then the character is assumed to throw off the effects of the last failure. Hence, a character at stage one would be wholly free of the taint of evil and returned to a state of grace, and a character who had progressed to stage three would pull back far enough from evil to return to the second stage.

Failure of the "redemptive" powers check indicates that the character can never again rise to a stage of less evil than he or she currently holds—the taint on his or her spirit is too great. While he or she might resist further descent into darkness, the character will never again be fully restored to the light.

Those who pass beyond "the embrace" and reach stage five or six are a lost cause. No amount of effort can free these characters from the shackles of despair that they have forged.

## Stages of Evil

If the dark powers act, the response varies in intensity from stage one (the weakest) to stage six. With each continuing offense and failed check, the response rises one level. If a player character reaches stage *five*, his or her adventuring days are over—the player must give the character to the Dungeon Master. The character becomes a nonplayer character, and a thoroughly evil and vicious opponent with which all the players must now contend. If the Dungeon Master chooses, the monstrous character may fail a final powers check, at which point the land grants the character a domain and makes him or her its lord.

**✣ Table 8: Failed Powers Checks Results ✣**

| Roll 1d6 | Stage One |
|---|---|
| 1 | Grows small fangs, but has putrid breath (–1 to Charisma; +2 damage in unarmed combat). |
| 2 | Fingers become furry and end in short claws (–1 to Dexterity; +2 damage in unarmed combat). |
| 3 | Has cat's eyes, but is able to see normally at night (–1 to Charisma). |
| 4 | Voice becomes a hoarse whisper, but character can use *ventriloquism* once per day (–1 to Charisma). |
| 5 | Ears become pointed and furry, but very keen (–1 to Charisma; +4 or +20% on hear-noise rolls). |
| 6 | Skin becomes cracked and hard (–1 to Charisma; base AC is 8). |
| | **Stage Two** |
| 1 | Grows long fangs and breath is a visible, reeking cloud (–2 to Charisma; +4 damage in unarmed combat). |
| 2 | Arms covered in fur and fingers end in long claws (–2 to Dexterity; +4 damage in unarmed combat). |
| 3 | Pupils glow in the dark like embers, but gains infravision to 60 feet (–2 to Charisma in darkness). |
| 4 | Skin is cold and clammy to the touch (half damage from all cold-based attacks). |
| 5 | Legs become deformed (normal movement reduced by half; able to *jump* three times per day). |
| 6 | Face becomes twisted and ugly, so all who look upon it must roll a fear check. |
| | **Stage Three** |
| 1 | Tongue becomes very long and injects type F poison (–3 to Charisma). |
| 2 | Foul stench surrounds character at all times (as a *stinking cloud* spell). |
| 3 | Gills develop on throat (–4 to Charisma; victim can breathe in either water or air). |
| 4 | Must consume one pint of fresh blood per day, but needs no other food or drink. |
| 5 | Skin becomes scaly as a lizard's (–4 to Charisma; base AC is 6). |
| 6 | Flesh begin to decay and rot, so all who look upon it must roll a horror check. |
| | **Stage Four** |
| 1 | Tongue becomes forked and injects type F poison (–4 to Charisma). |
| 2 | No animal can stand being within 25 feet of the victim. |
| 3 | Eyes melt away, leaving empty sockets, but victim gains permanent *true seeing* (Charisma of 4). |
| 4 | Skin becomes chitinous, like an insect's shell (–2 to Charisma *and* Dexterity; base AC is 4). |
| 5 | Victim's touch drains one life-energy (experience) level; victim can no longer gain levels. |
| 6 | Eyes burn like fire, and all who look upon it must successfully save vs. death or be stricken dead. |
| | **Stage Five** |
| | At this point the victim is transformed into a creature of darkness (e.g., vampire or lycanthrope). Further, his or her alignment becomes evil (if it is not so already), and all penalties for involuntary alignment shifts apply. Characters who reach the fifth stage of evil are not yet anchored to a lair (domain), but any player character who reaches this point becomes a nonplayer character under the control of the Dungeon Master. |
| | **Stage Six** |
| | The character is granted a small domain, becoming forever the prisoner of the dark powers. |

# IV: THE RAVENLOFT POWERS CHECK

In general, responses occur one stage at a time. However, if the character's actions are incredibly heinous, the powers may grant two responses instead of one (stages two and three, for example). The results are cumulative, so a character who reaches stage six still retains the mark of every preceding response.

Table 8: Failed Powers Checks Results provides the Dungeon Master with a list of possible outcomes for a failed check, and they can be chosen or determined by the roll of a die. However, the best fallout of a failed powers check is that which specifically relates in some way to the transgression that garnered the attentions of the dark powers.

**Stage one, the enticement:** At this point the dark powers only wish to test the depths of the offending character's potential for evil. The rewards and punishments are slight, and it is often the character's reaction to them that will determine his or her future. Therefore, the boon that the character enjoys is just a taste of power, and the drawback is minor at best.

**Stage two, the invitation:** By now the character has shown a genuine propensity for evil. Chances are he or she has enjoyed the benefit of the first failed check, and that its penalty has been a source of amusement. Now the dark powers want the character to feel a thrill of potency, and they want to see if he or she is not distressed by obvious signs of vice.

**Stage three, the touch of darkness:** By this time the character has accepted the invitation of the dark powers and embraced the trappings of evil. Associates of the persona should be fairly alarmed, for their erstwhile companion's evil is sure to have taken a more selfish turn—acts of darkness performed on behalf of the adventuring party are more frequently supplanted by actions that benefit the character alone. Now the dark powers are grooming the offender for nastier things to come, and redemption is nearly beyond reach.

**Stage four, the embrace:** When a character reaches this stage of moral decay, the dark powers have become intimate with his or her flaws, and they are well pleased. Now the character feasts upon potent fruits of black puissance, becoming a lethal menace to all who hold any shred of light in their hearts. Atonement is nothing less than miraculous now, for few creatures reach this point without having become thoroughly evil. If the character has not already been completely estranged from his or her comrades, they should surely abolish him or her now.

**Stage five, creature of Ravenloft:** At this point the character is transformed into a fiendish creature of the night, such as a vampire, ghost, or lycanthrope. His or her alignment shifts to evil (if it is not already so), and all penalties for involuntary alignment changes apply (see the *DMG*). Those who reach the fifth stage of corruption are not yet trapped within a domain of their own, but they are wholly tools of the dark powers. Therefore, they become nonplayer characters whose only chance for redemption lies in death and atonement, performed by those who knew the monster when it was mortal.

**Stage six, lord of a domain:** At this stage a character has proven that he or she belongs in Ravenloft forever. The next time the character steps into the Mists, the land reacts and creates a tiny domain no more than two miles across. (Most often, it's simply a dwelling and a yard.) At the Dungeon Master's option, the new domain can be attached to another domain or float separately.

No player character can be a lord. He or she becomes a nonplayer character controlled by the Dungeon Master. Like all other lords in Ravenloft, the character can never leave his or her domain. New darklords wield great power in their own, small realms, but they also suffer a "dangerous" curse, laid upon them by the powers of Ravenloft (see Chapter V). The Dungeon Master must tailor the new lord's curse and powers, using the lords of other domains as examples of what can be done.

# V: CURSES

Laying a curse upon another individual is not a small matter in Ravenloft. Dire words invoke the energies of the dark powers themselves, which is something too horrible for most people to even consider. Still, there are those who are drawn or pushed to that choice, either by their own weaknesses or by the wrongs that others inflict upon them.

## Types of Curses

There are three basic types of curses in Ravenloft, and each is horrible in its own way. Curiously, the least of these are the traditional magical curses of the AD&D game.

### Spellcasters' Curses

This type of curse is the most common and, as mentioned, the least powerful of the three. It includes such spells as *Allisandro's binding curse* (Wz 9), *ancient curse* (Pr 7), *divine curse* (Pr 6), *geas* (Wz 6), *limited wish* (Wz 7), *quest* (Pr 5), and *wish* (Wz 9). *Bestow curse* (the reverse of the 3rd-level priest spell *remove curse*) is too insignificant to count as a curse in the Demiplane of Dread.

There are many other spells that may be considered curses in Ravenloft, depending on their use. Examples of such spells might include *feeblemind*, *polymorph other*, and similar spells of a negative and permanent nature. Into this category falls the case of a hag who transforms into a loathsome toad a handsome prince who rejected her advances.

The decision of whether a spell is being used as a curse is, of course, up to the Dungeon Master. If the player states that this is his or her intention, then the casting should definitely be considered a curse. If the player denies that this is his or her desire, then the Dungeon Master must reserve the final word. The guidelines in the "Curses Laid by Player Characters" section (page 65) should be consulted before any player character is allowed to invoke such powerful magic.

Note that those who hold a cursed object fall under the category of spell curses. Such curses can be quite severe and all but inescapable. Of course, some cursed objects are not worth the attentions of the dark powers. The holder of a *sword –1* has no right to complain about this insignificant curse, which only reduces his or her chances to hit an enemy in combat by a petty 5%. Even someone wearing a *ring of contrariness* is really quite fortunate when compared to some of the more severe curse victims found in Ravenloft.

### Self-induced Curses

This is a fairly traditional way to suffer a curse. It includes all manner of afflictions brought about by the inner desires and lusts of individuals. No outside agents are responsible for what happens to affected characters—they have only themselves to blame.

Ravenloft's classic example of this type of curse is the case of Strahd von Zarovich, who hungered so much for eternal life that he sacrificed his own brother and drove the woman he loved to seek death. He was "rewarded" with a transformation into an undying vampire lord, but he was cursed to suffer eternally for those things that he had done to attain his immortality. It is said that no one in Ravenloft bears a heavier curse than that of Strahd.

Self-induced curses are some of the most interesting, and they can be used to spice up many adventures. They can transform an otherwise drab and lifeless nonplayer character into an individual that the players will long remember. Perhaps the best examples of this type of curse can be found in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, and on numerous episodes of

the classic television shows *The Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*.

There are actually two types of self-induced curses. The first is the consequence of a life poorly lived. A man who spends his time hoarding coins in his counting house and eagerly stripping the unfortunate of their meager possessions might well end up wearing the heavy chains of a curse. This is a common origin for ghosts and similar creatures, like Jacob Marley in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

The second type of self-induced curse is manifested from a single act of evil, so vile that it earns the attention of the dark powers or some supernatural being. In Ravenloft, such a curse may be invoked simply by violating sacred chambers and undertaking acts such as grave robbing. In Har'Akir, one of the easiest ways to become cursed is to violate one of the tombs that house the mummified remains of the pharaohs. Similar acts in other domains might bring down a curse that may linger for days, weeks, years, or even generations. Sometimes, this type of curse can fall upon the most innocent and kind people, as a misunderstanding of sorts—if the best of intentions results in the worst of misery, then the perpetrator may suffer for his or her mistake.

## Curses of Vengeance

This is the most traditional type of curse. It falls upon someone who has wronged another so greatly that the victim's hatred and fury is given form by the Mists of Ravenloft, and a curse descends to drape the offender in a shroud of evil. This is also commonly called a *Vistani curse*, as those people are noted for their ability to invoke that dark and sinister magic.

This sort of curse is used to great effectiveness in countless stories, from fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast* to the works of modern horror authors like Stephen King. Similarly, they can be very useful to Dungeon Masters of the RAVENLOFT game.

The most common form of this type of curse is fairly well known. A man is convicted of a murder he did not commit, for example, and sentenced to be hanged. On the gallows, he points out the man who framed him for the crime and issues a scalding condemnation of the fiend for his dark act. Few feel pity for the true criminal when he gradually begins to suffer from a series of mysterious calamities.

A curse of this nature can also be laid upon someone by an enemy who sees his or her own defeat as a great wrong. The important factor in weaving a curse is not whether an actual wrongful act has been committed, but whether the victim *perceives* that he or she has been wronged. Curses of this type, then, make a great "parting shot" for a villain on the edge of utter defeat.

Consider a group of adventurers that has driven a dark necromancer to the edge of a volcanic precipice and is about to force her into the fires and end her reign of terror. Just as a gleaming obsidian tipped arrow sinks into the wizard's chest and she topples backward, she might lay a deadly curse on the heroes who bested her. Were the adventurers right to destroy the foul necromancer? Certainly, but not in the mind of their opponent. To her, they were meddlesome travelers who had no right to interfere with her plans.

Similarly, this type of curse can be employed by those who feel that they have been wronged when no slight was ever intended. A beautiful woman who feels that her younger sister is blossoming into a splendor finer than she might view this as an act of calculated evil. (If her sister knew her place, she would dress more plainly and spend more time praising the beauty of her elder sibling.) In fact, the younger girl might have no idea that her sister feels this way. She might even be attempting to model herself after her older sibling, whom she sees as far more attractive than she could ever be. Nevertheless, if the older girl decides that she

has been wronged, her own wrath can be enough to give power to the curse. These are perhaps the darkest of curses, for they are cast upon the innocent.

For the purposes of any curse, though, it's all a matter of perception.

## Designing a Curse

One of the elements stressed in RAVENLOFT campaigns is the subtle *twist*—taking a traditional convention of the Gothic horror model and tweaking it in order to take the player characters by surprise. For instance, each vampire that heroes battle should be a bit different from the classic model. This can be as simple as describing the monster in some slightly deceptive way, hiding its true nature, or giving it unusual powers that other members of its kind don't share. However this is done, it keeps the players uncertain about the magnitude of the foe their characters are facing, and it gives them a feeling of doubt about their characters' ability to overcome it. This engenders the higher level of suspense and role-playing that is so vital to a good RAVENLOFT adventure.

This same advice applies to curses: Make each one different. Customize each curse so that it either matches the personality of the character laying it or that of the character against which it is targeted (or, ideally, both). Consider the player running that character too. His or her own likes and dislikes can be very useful in designing a curse. For instance, if the Dungeon Master knows that Jon (the player) has a fascination with ancient books and history, he or she can use this information to improve the impact of a curse. Suppose that every book or scroll Jon's character touched were to wither into ash. If, on the other hand, Jon happened to be a cat fancier, then it might be that all such animals would hiss and snarl in his presence. Sure, this is hitting below the belt, but that's what curses are all about.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the crafting of a proper Ravenloft curse. They are discussed in the following pages.

## Wording

An important element in laying a curse is the manner in which it is invoked. Consider an example of a peasant who has been beaten without just cause by an evil, high-level warrior. (This example will be carried throughout the chapter.) If the victim simply says, "I curse your sword arm!" he or she isn't going to add much to the flavor of a game set in the Demiplane of Dread. This is reflected in a reduced chance that the curse will take effect. On the other hand, an imaginative and spiteful curse can do wonders to increase the tension and mood. Because of this, those who employ eloquent enchantments find that the chances of success for their curses are greatly enhanced.

Suppose that the beaten peasant looked up from the ground, pointed a long, bony finger at the towering knight who beat him, and declared:

*By the blackness of the night,*
*Never more shall your sword bite!*
*Weakened be the hand that holds it,*
*Darkness comes now to enfold it!*

Now *there's* a curse. The intent is clear, and it accomplishes many of the important things that a curse must do. If curses are shrouded in this sort of dark and macabre atmosphere, they'll make every aspect of the game associated with them far more enjoyable and theatrical. In fact, Dungeon Masters should consider the wording of a curse as important as the justification for invoking it.

It is important to keep the wording in tune with the adventure. Some people phrase their curses in poetic verse, like the one presented above, but such a flowery curse would hardly be fitting to a bestial madman or an uneducated brute.

The essence of the matter lies in conveying the raw emotion of the curser. While the Vistani have elevated the curse to an almost ritualistic level, calling for more poetic expression, most people don't pause to think up a biting rhyme. The player who is to deliver the words of the curse must consider exactly how his or her character feels at the very moment, and then attempt to give voice to that wrath. A moment of stunned silence in the room after the curse has been uttered is a good sign that the hex is an effective one.

## Never Mention Game Mechanics

While curses almost always have a direct effect in terms of numbers and statistics that form the core of AD&D game adventures, this element must be disguised in the Demiplane of Dread. Consider the cursing peasant again. He clearly intends to reduce the warrior's ability to wield his sword in combat. Thus, the Dungeon Master might decide that the knight will now suffer a –4 penalty to all attack rolls. This need never be said, though, because the ominous wording of the curse makes its effect clear.

Actually, this prohibition applies to all aspects of a RAVENLOFT game. (Indeed, it is good advice to consider when playing any role-playing game.) The less frequently numbers and *game-speak* are tossed around, the more exciting and intense the game session will be.

Unfortunately, some numbers are unavoidable. If a player decides that his or her character will swing a battle axe at a rampaging werewolf, he or she has to tell the Dungeon Master how many points of damage were inflicted by the blow. Still, these necessary terms can be couched in drama. Instead of saying, "Fenix swings and hits for 9 points of damage," a creative player can say, "Fenix swings his gleaming battle axe in a mighty arc, cutting deep into the werewolf's flesh and inflicting 9 points of damage!" This

may seem like a minor point, but all the little things add up to make a truly enjoyable game.

## Avoid Broad Prohibitions

This element is related to the wording of a curse. In simple terms, an action should not be *outlawed* by a curse, but *regulated* by it. In other words, punish the desired action, but still allow it to be done.

Returning to the example of the cursing peasant, he might have worded it differently, simply saying something like, "May you never strike successfully in combat again!" Such a sweeping restriction, however, would utterly change the brute's life, but it would not be the most effective curse. (The warrior would have to give up his profession, but then the curse would no longer trouble him.)

Curses should certainly be targeted against an offender in a manner that reflects the nature of the wrong committed, but the effects should be far more exacting than a simple and broad prohibition. A properly worded curse taunts the offender by injuring his or her abilities rather than destroying them. This is more insidious and colorful.

## Be Sure the Curse Is Well Founded

When is it possible to invoke a curse? A spellcaster can create one at any time, if the proper magic has been memorized, but for others the circumstances must be right. For those not wielding magic, situations must warrant laying a curse. Generally this means that a great wrong must have been perpetrated (or perceived, of course).

There are a number of factors that contribute to a person's ability to invoke a curse in the Demiplane of Dread. Among the most important are the emotion of the victim and the degree of harm done by the person to be cursed. Other elements are important, too, and they'll be discussed in the text that follows. See the Table 10: Curse Success Chances (page 64) for percentage chances that can be applied to the conditions outlined below.

**Justification:** This aspect of a curse rates the degree of wrong done to the person invoking the curse, the actual perceived importance of the act in the curser's eyes, and the frequency with which that character makes use of such dark means of revenge. There are several categories into which a person's pretext for throwing a curse falls:

- *Unjustified curses* are those that are cast without cause. They are tossed off without much forethought and with very little reason. Spellcasters who are too quick to weave their mystical enchantments over any minor slight will soon find that nearly all of their curses fall into this category. Such scourges have a very low chance of actually taking effect.
- *Justified curses* are those that have a fair reason to be laid. For example, if a woman finds out that the neighbors have been stealing her best silver and laughing about it behind her back for many years, she might decide to curse them. This is certainly justified, for she has been wronged. These curses are more effective than unjustified ones, but still have a fair chance of failing when invoked.
- *Highly justified curses* are those that are cast in response to a great wrong or threat. Someone who has been badly trampled by a careless rider's thundering horse might well reach into the darkest parts of his or her mind to draw forth a curse of vengeance in the last seconds of life. The chance that a highly justified curse will be effective is very good.

**Emotional content:** The mental state of a person invoking a curse is critical to the final effect that it will have. A woman who is enraged and heartbroken that her son has died because of the incompetence of a physician will be able to unleash a highly effective curse. Her soul is torn apart by the torment and hatred that ignite within her. Whether the physician truly was inept is not important at this point; all that matters is the perception of

the woman. There are three categories into which emotional content can be split:

✣ *Normal emotional states* are seldom productive when it comes to the bewitching power of a curse. Anyone who is still in complete control of his or her mental faculties is seldom able to generate the emotional power needed to bring on a mighty curse. Only those people of a most passionate and fiery nature are able to weave an enchantment in this state.

✣ *Charged emotional states* are those that involve a wrong that is sensed by the rational mind. States of extreme anger or hatred, as opposed to outright bestial rage, mark this condition. Curses cast by those in this frame of mind are somewhat less effective than those invoked by someone who is highly charged. Still, they stand a fair chance of taking effect. A man who has been wrongly accused of a crime by a crooked sheriff trying to cover his own misdeeds might easily fall into this category.

✣ *Highly charged emotional states* are by far the most effective for unleashing a curse. The animalistic passions and primitive emotions that mark such a mood drive out rational thought, giving control of the mint over to a frenzy of bestial fervor. Such a base personality is more likely to make contact with the darkness that infuses Ravenloft and to bend the powers of the Demiplane of Dread to his or her own desires. A woman who has been betrayed by a man who professed to love her for many years and now leaves her standing at the altar may well fall into this category. Similarly, a parent mourning the needless loss of a child might easily be in a highly charged emotional state.

**Additional considerations:** There are many things that may make a curse more or less effective. Each of these should be considered, but none of them is nearly as important as the emotional state of the wronged person or the justification behind the curse. Let those factors be the general guide, and consider the following as tangential at best:

✣ *Background.* Some people are more adept at bringing about curses than others. There are many facets to be considered in this matter. For example. the Vistani are noted for having great power to curse those who wrong them. Seldom, if ever, does a curse laid by a Vistana fail to take hold. The outcast darklings (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 [2122]) are also renowned curse weavers, though not of the same power as their former kindred.

Natives of Ravenloft are usually better at laying curses that will take hold than travelers from other lands, who have been drawn into the domains and are seeking escape. In general, the more closely a person is tied to the land of the Mists, the more likely it is that attempts at cursing will succeed.

The age of the person speaking the curse seems to have no impact on the chances of it taking hold, although gender does. Females seem to be slightly better at invoking the wrath of black fate than males, for reasons unknown to science or magic. Tradition says that this reflects the emotional nature of a woman's heart, but none can say for sure.

✣ *Character type.* Those who are familiar with magic, be they mighty or lowly, have a better ability to curse than those who have no use for arcane crafts. However, this has only a minimal effect on the curse's chance of taking hold. A familiarity with magic is useful, but hardly necessary. Once again, far more important are justification and emotional content.

✣ *Alignment.* Another consideration is the alignment of the person laying the curse. Those of evil or chaotic alignments have a slightly better chance of unleashing an effective curse than those of good or lawful natures. This consideration also pales in comparison with the first two considerations of emotion and justification.

✣ *Drama.* The conditions under which the curse is cast should be taken into account. Some times and places are particularly well suited to curses. A curse laid by someone on

his or her deathbed is generally more dramatic (and therefore more effective) than one laid over a nice cup of tea. An invocation made in a graveyard or an evil temple is certainly going to have a greater impact than one voiced in a dining room. Speaking a curse from the top of a battlement at the stroke of midnight during the most intense moment of a tremendous thunderstorm is certainly better that pronouncing it on a lazy summer day.

## Tailor the Curse

One of the most satisfying things about curses is that they can be made to fit the crime. If a curse is to be truly effective, it must touch its victim in a personal and emotional way. Whenever its effect is felt, the victim must be reminded of his or her misdeeds, be they real or imagined. The hardship that the curse brings should be a painful thorn in the side.

Poetic justice is crucial to designing an effective curse. (Read Dante's classic *Inferno* for some excellent examples of fitting curses.) In short, the punishment must fit not only the person doing the deed, but also the deed itself. If a curse is well tailored, it will be far more effective in role-playing. With a little imagination and effort, such things can make for a truly memorable game session or an outstanding nonplayer character.

Consider once again the peasant's curse upon the cruel warrior. While this is a wholly unchivalrous act in the first place, consider the possibility that the beating was delivered out of a love for brutality and not because of some perceived wrong done by the peasant. For the sake of the example, say that the peasant happened to stumble and bump into the knight's horse while it was tied outside a blacksmith's shop. As a final element, assume that the knight, after beating the peasant, raises his sword and kills the poor wretch as a twisted lesson to all those watching. The peasant lingers just long enough to voice his curse, and then dies:

*By the blackness of the night,*
*Never more shall your sword bite!*
*Feeble be the hand that holds it,*
*Faded strength shall now to enfold it!*

This verse targets the knight's personality by weakening the value of his sword in combat. Had the offender been a priest, this would hardly have been appropriate. By the same token, it punishes the act of murder by relating the curse to the type of weapon employed. A curse relating to the knight's wealth or position would have been less worthy. The scene is certainly dramatic, too—a dying man hissing a curse with his last breath—and the curse is clearly both justified and backed by strong emotion.

## Define Constant or Triggered Effects

Generally, curses manifest themselves in two ways. The first produces a continual effect that constantly hampers the character in his or her daily life. Generally, these curses are less intense, but more obvious to the outside world. The second variety of curse lies dormant until someone takes some action or until the recipient is in a certain situation, at which time the curse takes effect. Often the dividing line between these two types of curses is vague.

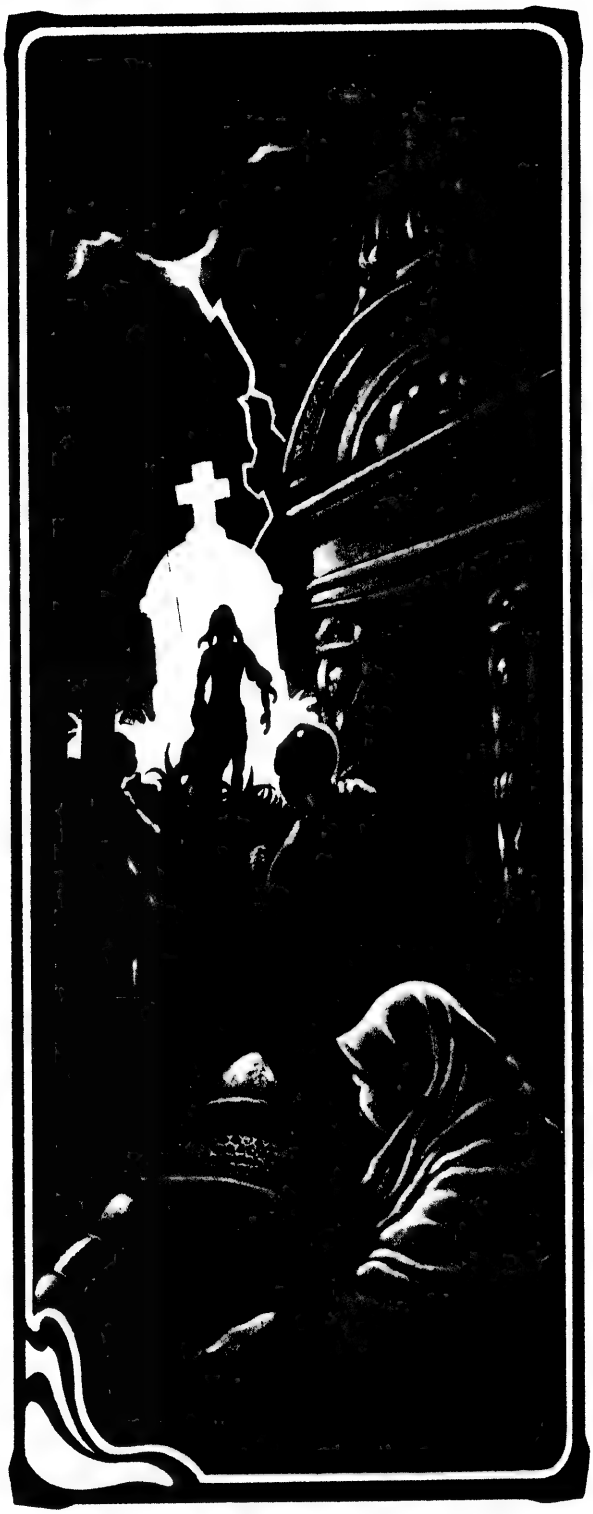
**Constant curses:** Someone who has been endowed with horrible and intractable body odor would be suffering from a constant curse, as is the handsome prince who has been transformed into a frog. A general rule—and there are certainly many exceptions—is that these types of curses are less dramatic than triggered curses in game effect. Obviously, being changed into a frog has a pretty big impact on the handsome prince's life, but so extreme a curse is uncommon.

If the peasant's curse had been worded differently, it might well be taken as a constant curse. Suppose, for example, that it was presented in this way:

*By the blackness of the night,*
*Gone forever is your might!*
*Weakened be your mortal frame,*
*With these words your strength I claim!*

Such a curse might be interpreted in game terms as a reduction in the knight's Strength score. The actual numeric loss would be up to the Dungeon Master, but 4 lost points should be the upper limit.

**Triggered curses:** These curses are often far more dramatic in their effects than constant curses. The peasant's curse actually falls into this category, for the knight is perfectly normal until he seeks to use his blade in combat. At that point, his sword arm becomes feeble, greatly reducing his effectiveness and prestige as a warrior. While wording the oath as a constant curse might reduce his Strength by perhaps 4 points, wording it as a triggered curse it can have far more impact—it might even cause his Strength score to plunge to a score of 3 when he strikes with his sword! Such a reduction in his chances of hitting a foe, and the minimal damage he could inflict, would certainly remind him painfully of the poor peasant that he wrongfully killed.



## Include an Escape Clause

What makes a curse interesting in a role-playing game is the opportunity to either learn to live with it or to be rid of it. When a nonplayer character suffers from a curse, escaping its effects becomes mostly a plot convention. If, however, the victim of the curse is a player character, the situation becomes far more important. In either case, the curse is more enjoyable if it is more than constant and inescapable trouble. Therefore, every curse should have some sort of escape contingency built into it. For the purposes of classification, escape clauses are split into two distinct types.

**Avoidance:** Perhaps the easiest way for someone to be rid of a curse is to simply shut out the action that triggers it. Sometimes this is

easy to do: The cruel knight who beat the peasant might be able to avoid the curse simply by using a mace in combat instead of a sword. This might not be much of a sacrifice, unless the blade he was forced to spurn was a family heirloom or was greatly enchanted. Anyway, it is thus possible to avoid a curse without actually being free of its effects.

It is even possible, in some cases, to avoid the main impact of a constant curse. A vain prince who has been rendered horribly ugly by the curse of a rejected lover might resort to wearing a mask at all times. This would allow him to continue dealing with the world, even though it doesn't actually eliminate the curse.

**Redemption:** It is possible to be free of a curse by performing a certain act or by suffering appropriately for a certain time. The way by which a cursed person is freed the affliction must be related to the act that brought about the curse in the first place. Further, it must be a part of the curse itself. Suppose that the peasant's curse had been worded thus:

*You bring the blackness of the night,*
*Your heart is evil, full of spite,*
*Until some fair amends you make,*
*Each sword you wield shall surely break!*

The wording of this curse allows the knight to escape the peasant's wrath by mending his evil ways. If he becomes fair and just, he will again be able to wield his favorite weapon with power and dignity. (Of course, he might be unable to change his nature, but that is up to him.) The best curse will act as a corrective measure, much as a punishment might be used to teach a child not to lie.

## Define the Strength of the Curse

The final aspect to consider in designing a curse is the relative strength of the curse being cast. In general, curses can be grouped into five different levels of seriousness: *embarrassing*, *frustrating*, *troublesome*, *dangerous*, and *lethal*.

**Embarrassing curses:** These, the least of curses, are used to punish minor transgressions. A thief who has stolen from his brother (who can afford it, but is shocked by the betrayal of trust) might be cursed by his sibling to have hands as black as coal. There is little actual game effect from this curse, but it adds a touch of flavor and serves as a constant reminder to the thief of his wrongdoing. If he chooses, the thief can hide this affliction by wearing gloves (although wearing gloves might hinder his thieving abilities). Another example of an embarrassing curse is a callous rake who is cursed to stutter whenever he speaks to a beautiful woman.

**Frustrating curses:** These curses answer fairly moderate affronts. They interfere with a person's everyday life and may be imposing in their effects. Frustrating curses often have some negative effect on an aspect of game mechanics. If the thief in the above example had lifted a valuable gold watch from his brother's pocket, he might be cursed to have his hands shake incessantly. This would cause a reduction in his chances of success when he tried to use many of his thieving skills—while he still might be able to move silently or hide in shadows, he would certainly have problems picking a pocket or disarming a trap. The severity of the penalty is up to the Dungeon Master, but it should take into account the seriousness of the offense and the emotion of the person laying the curse.

**Troublesome curses:** These curses are perhaps the most useful for adventure design purposes. In general, troublesome curses can be laid only for major offenses. They dramatically alter the victim's life, although they place him or her in no true physical peril. The peasant's curse upon the cruel warrior is a troublesome curse. In many cases, these curses will impact one or more aspects of game mechanics. In the case of the thief, for example, he might be afflicted

with an aversion to gold, so that the mere sight of the metal causes him extreme pain. This effect might be further augmented by implanting an unending desire for gold in his heart, making him a miser who cannot touch what he covets most.

**Dangerous curses:** This is truly powerful magic that is doled out only in response to a great wrong. A dangerous curse radically alters the victim's former lifestyle. The peasant's curse might fall into this category if it were more severe—if it caused the knight's sword arm to whither like an old tree limb for instance. Any curse in this category can utterly destroy a person's life. If the thief were stricken blind for a day the moment he violated a law, his career as a rogue would be over.

It is recommended that player characters *not* be stricken with curses of this magnitude unless the means for removing the curse are fairly close at hand.

A curse of this level might cause someone to be afflicted with lycanthropy on the three nights of the full moon. Here, the individual would live normally until the first time the light of the full moon breaks the horizon.

**Lethal curses:** This is the most dreadful type of curse, for it utterly destroys the victim's way of life and may even lead to death. It is only possible to bestow so powerful a curse in response to a great wrong, and it must be laid with great emotion. It is said that these curses are handed down directly from the dark powers as a prelude to the absolute destruction of someone for whom there is no hope of redemption. Any curse that utterly transforms someone's physical or mental self would fall into this category. Strahd von Zarovich's transformation to a vampire was the result of such a curse.

Player characters should never fall under this type of curse unless it is the Dungeon Master's desire to remove the character from the game. If this is the case, the player ought to be aware of the potential loss of the character, and should be offered a chance to repent before the curse takes hold. Otherwise, hard feelings are sure to result, which isn't much fun for anyone.

## Powers Checks for Cursing

Speaking a curse is no small matter in the Demiplane of Dread. The very nature of the act sends a shiver through the fabric of the land, which cannot help but draw the attention of the dark powers. Thus, as soon as the curse is uttered, the individual laying it must roll a Ravenloft powers check (see Chapter IV).

The chance of failing this check varies with the power of the curse. The more deadly the curse, the more likely it is to earn the attention of the dark powers. Table 9: Powers Check Chances for Cursing indicates the normal chances that a powers check will fail for a curse of a given level. Dungeon Masters are free to modify the numbers, based on the circumstances of the event. A highly justified curse, for example, would be less likely to see the caster punished than one laid out of pure spite and malice.

**Table 9:**
**✣ Powers Check Chances for Cursing ✣**

| Curse Strength | Powers Check |
|---|---|
| Embarrassing | 2% |
| Frustrating | 4% |
| Troublesome | 8% |
| Dangerous | 16% |
| Lethal | 32% |

## Resolving the Curse

Once a curse has been laid, the Dungeon Master must decide whether it takes hold and, if it does, what exact effect it has. There are some guidelines for these decisions.

The most important rule of thumb is if it is dramatically appropriate for the curse to take hold, then it does so. *In the AD&D game, no matter what the campaign setting, it is*

*important to bear in mind that no table or rule of numbers can replace the insight and eye of the Dungeon Master.* This is as true for curses as it is for encounters, events, checks of all types, and combat (in short, die rolls of *every* kind). If the Dungeon Master's story would be served better by having the curse succeed, then it succeeds. On the other hand, if it would impede the progress of the adventure, then it fails; that's all there is to it!

Still, there are those who demand, and not incorrectly, a table that gives them some idea of the percentage chance that a curse will take hold. The base possibility for a curse to take effect is 0%. When a curse is laid, the Dungeon Master should proceed through each of the modifiers in the following table and then roll against the final total.

✣ Table 10: Curse Success Chances ✣

| Result of Powers Check | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Succeeded | –25% |
| Failed | +25% |
| **Justification** | **Modifier** |
| Highly justified | +10% |
| Justified | 0% |
| Unjustified | –10% |
| **Emotional State** | **Modifier** |
| Highly charged | +15% |
| Charged | +5% |
| Normal | –10% |
| **Background** | **Modifier** |
| Vistani | +25% |
| Other Ravenloft native | +10% |
| Non-native | –10% |
| Male | –5% |
| Female | +10% |
| **Character Type** | **Modifier** |
| Spellcaster | +5% |
| Nonspellcaster | –5% |
| Lawful | –5% |
| Chaotic | +5% |
| Good | –10% |
| Evil | +10% |
| **Drama of Curse** | **Modifier** |
| High | +25% |
| Average | 0% |
| Low | –25% |
| **Important Curse Basics** | **Modifier** |
| Mentions game mechanics | –15% |
| Includes broad prohibitions | –15% |
| Not tailored to victim | –15% |
| No escape clause | –15% |

## Curses Laid by Player Characters

Curses can be very powerful things. Used correctly, they can create some stunning effects on both the adventure and the characters in it. However, this same potential impact can drive a Dungeon Master to despair if it is unleashed upon the adventure at an unexpected time. Even the mightiest efforts of the Dungeon Master can be ruined by a casually tossed curse. What this means is player characters should not be able to freely toss curses around.

This doesn't mean that a player character should be unable to lay a curse. Curses can be fun (in game terms), and the players expect to have fun when they enter the realms of the Dungeon Master's imagination, so let player characters invoke curses, but only under controlled circumstances.

The Dungeon Master should pay careful attention to the use of a curse by a player character. The rules that govern curse content and style should be very strictly enforced, but the most important thing is that the curse be appropriately dramatic. For example, assume the player characters have been hunting a vampire across the wilds of Valachan. On the wooded shores of the Arden River, just outside of Habelnik, they believe that they have cornered the monster. In reality, however, they have walked into a trap. One of their number is killed when the vampire strikes and the others are left wounded and unable to follow as it flees into the night. If the dying character wasn't utterly vaporized, then the Dungeon Master might allow a last few words: With a dying breath, the character curses the vampire that killed him or her. Similarly, if one of the other characters in the group had a special relationship to the deceased, he or she might hold the fallen one and speak a tearful curse against the vampire that claimed the beloved companion.

Such curses still require a Ravenloft powers check, of course, and that alone can be enough to keep many players from using them. If players insist on invoking curses frequently, ignoring the peril that they place themselves in by exposing themselves to the dark powers in this way, simply stop rolling for their checks. Assume that they fail automatically. The Dungeon Master will probably find that a player whose character has begun to change into a reptilian swamp dweller is less prone to accept future gifts of the dark powers.

## Exclusivity of Curses

As a general rule, any individual—player character or nonplayer character—can suffer the effects of only one curse at a time. Otherwise, a truly evil brute—the type of person who makes for an excellent antagonist in any adventure—could quickly become so burdened with curses that he or she would be crippled. What a waste of a perfectly good villain that would be! Therefore, no curse can affect a character if he or she already suffers from one.

An important note to make at this point concerns the domain lords. By definition, all of them are laboring under the most horrible curse of all: that of ruling a domain in Ravenloft. Thus, any curse that the players might wish to lay upon them is doomed to fail.

# VI: SPELLS IN RAVENLOFT

Ravenloft is insulated from outside forces, particularly those of goodness. Some spells have new effects as a result, especially those involving divination, summoning, and necromancy. This chapter describes changes to familiar spells in Ravenloft. At the end of the chapter, several spells unique to the campaign setting are included as well.

*Priests and wizards do not know the altered effects of a spell until they cast it, at which time they are instantly aware, unless its description below states otherwise* (*ESP* is an example). Any magical item that casts or imitates an altered spell is subject to the same changes. In such cases, though, the user is not informed of the changes.

## Priest Magic

Priests are perhaps more likely to suffer for their choice of occupation than any other class, for the dark powers distort the connection between the faithful and their patron gods and goddesses, attempting to isolate them from their source of strength.

**Cooperative magic:** By and large, cooperative magic is unaffected in Ravenloft. The idea of several priests operating together for a single spell effect is not relevant to the concerns of the demiplane.

**Faith magic:** Faith magic works on the principle of devotional power, which is accumulated through mass worship. The more worshipers, the stronger the magic. Since there are few organized religions in Ravenloft, faith magic is difficult to achieve. There are several underground religions and a few large accepted religions in Ravenloft. For example, the domain of G'Henna is ruled by an evil priest capable of wielding faith magic of immense power.

**Quest spells:** Most rules for this type of magic still apply. Quest spells are reserved for situations that are at the heart of a deity's interests. Since no power appears to have an interest in Ravenloft, few quest spells should be granted. (Even powers who represent the forces of good have turned a blind eye to Ravenloft.) It is not enough to say that the quest spell should be granted to help wipe out the forces of evil. The cause must be much more directly related to the power's specific interests.

The alterations to quest spells described in this chapter are optional. The direct attention of a power is involved to receive a quest spell, and it is conceivable that a deity could override the restrictions of Ravenloft. The Dungeon Master must make judgments based upon the adventure and campaign. If they are better served by keeping the original definition of the quest spell, then the Dungeon Master should do so. Keep in mind that this is a Gothic horror setting—the characters are supposed to be frightened and feel as if they are powerless (but they're also supposed to be able to win).

**The sphere of Summoning:** Spells in this sphere are limited. A given domain may not offer a full complement of animals and monsters, and priests can't summon a creature that doesn't live in the domain. To determine whether a particular animal may inhabit an area, check the domain's description. If the text doesn't state otherwise, Dungeon Masters can assume that all normal animals are available. If the animal is a type the lord of the domain can control, however, the lord's power supersedes the priest's magic. The animal still appears when summoned, but it may not be friendly, depending on the lord's instructions.

Summoning creatures from outside Ravenloft is possible, the subjects of these spells are likely to be *very* unhappy when they learn that they must find their own ways back to their places of origin. Non-evil beings will expect a very good explanation at the least, and evil creatures are likely to attack the priest if given

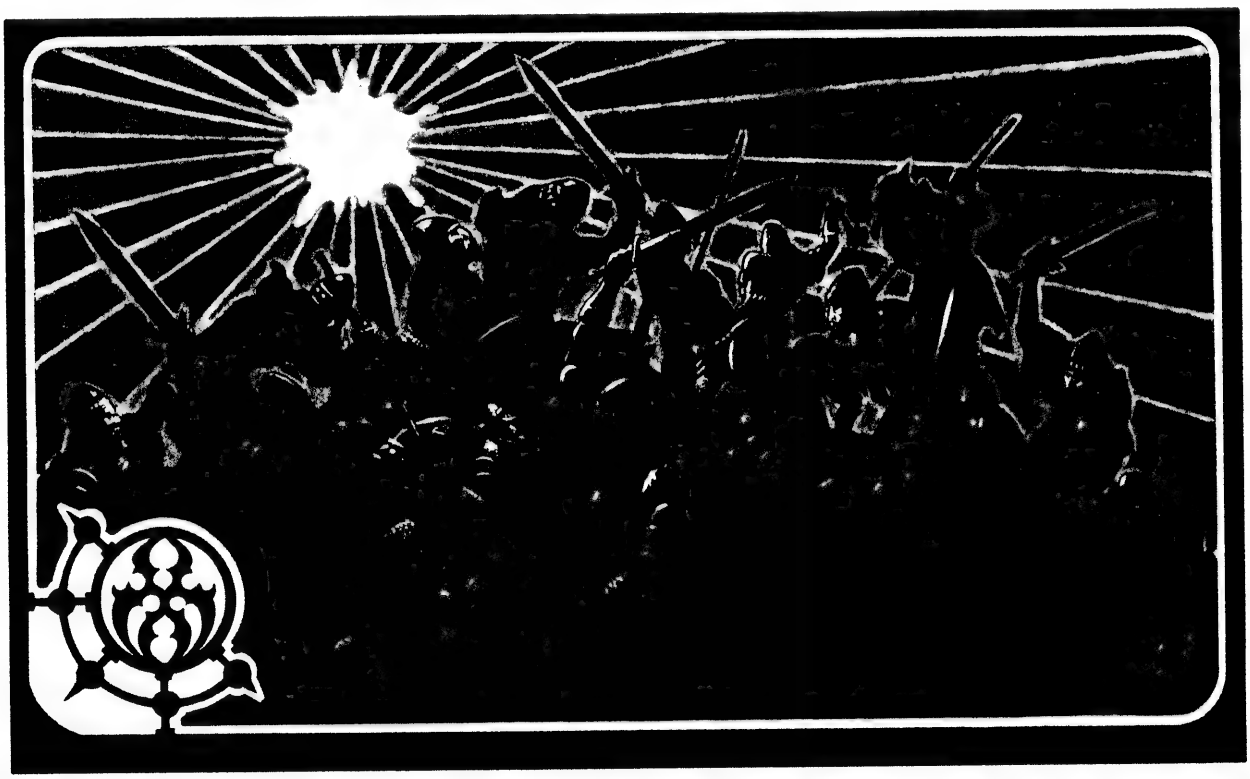
the chance. See the specific summoning spells in the following pages for exact effects of the casting as possible reactions of those creatures that appear at the priest's bidding.

**The sphere of War:** The spells in this sphere are intended for use in BATTLESYSTEM® rules or BATTLESYSTEM *Skirmishes* games, but these games are rarely used in Ravenloft, as Gothic horror and medieval battles don't go together very well. However, there is one place where the use of War spells is appropriate. On occasion, a group of angry villagers (usually brandishing torches and pitchforks) may go monster hunting. This is a classic scene drawn from the old horror movies. Some of the spells from the sphere of War are appropriate to use on a crowd of irate villagers.

These spells cannot create a mob or incite a crowd to go after the monster. The situation must already exist in which a mob or crowd has gathered with the express purpose to hunt down a monster, break into a castle, or engage in some other mass combat activity. There must be at least 10 adults in the crowd for it to qualify as a unit in BATTLESYSTEM game terms. Anything less than 10 is just a group of individuals.

Every mob must have a leader, too. Usually this is a particularly incensed member of the crowd, someone who has been personally wronged by the situation or monster. (It is possible for a player character to lead a mob.) If the leader ever falls, there is a 25% chance for a new leader to rise from the ranks of the mob. This should also be someone personally wronged by the situation or monster.

The mob will have a morale rating of 9. When used in an adventure, crowds and mobs do not make fear or horror checks; those are reserved for individuals. The mob rolls a morale check in any circumstance normally dictated by the AD&D game rules, and in any situation where an individual would roll a fear or horror check in Ravenloft.

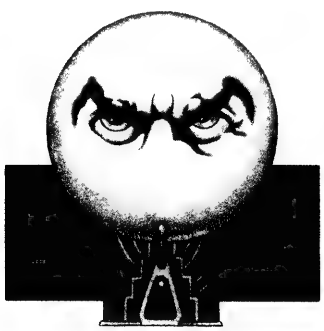


## Altered Priest Spells

The priest spells listed below work differently in Ravenloft. Spells immediately followed by an asterisk (*) require a Ravenloft powers check. A description of the changes follows the table, supplementing the rules in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Tome of Magic*. The reverse of a spell is listed beside its counterpart (following a slash). Versions of spells that work normally in Ravenloft appear in parentheses.

**✣ Table 11: Altered Priest Spells ✣**

*Analyze balance* (1st)
*Courage* (1st)
*Detect evil/detect good* (1st)
*Emotion read* (1st)
*Know age* (1st)
*Morale* (1st)
*Speak with astral traveler* (1st)
*Thought capture* (1st)
*Create holy symbol** (2nd)
*Know alignment* (2nd)
*Mind read* (2nd)
*Mystic transfer* (2nd)
*Nap* (2nd)
*Rally* (2nd)
*Sanctify/defile** (2nd)
*Animate dead** (3rd)
*Astral window* (3rd)
*Choose future* (3rd)
(*Cure disease*)/ *cause disease** (3rd)
*Emotion control* (3rd)
*Feign death** (3rd)
*Helping hand* (3rd)
*Negative plane protection* (3rd)
*Remove curse*/ *bestow curse** (3rd)
*Speak with dead** (3rd)
*Abjure* (4th)
*Call woodland beings* (4th)
*Dimensional folding* (4th)
*Focus** (4th)
*Join with astral traveler* (4th)
*Leadership*/ *doubt* (4th)
*Modify memory** (4th)
*Probability control* (4th)
*Rapport* (4th)
*Reflecting pool* (4th)
*Thought broadcast* (4th)
*Weather stasis* (4th)
*Commune* (5th)
*Dispel evil* (5th)
*Magic font* (5th)
*Plane shift* (5th)
*Quest* (5th)
*Raise dead*/ *slay living** (5th)
*True seeing* (5th)
*Age creature*/ (*restore youth*) (6th)
*Conjure fire elemental*/ *dismiss fire elemental* (6th)
*Find the path* (6th)
*The great circle*/ *the black circle** (6th)



*Group mind* (6th)
*Land of stability* (6th)
*Sol's searing orb* (6th)
*Word of recall* (6th)
*Astral spell* (7th)
(*Breath of life*)/ *breath of death** (7th)
*Conjure earth elemental*/ *dismiss earth elemental* (7th)
*Gate** (7th)
*Holy word*/ *unholy word** (7th)
*Reincarnation** (7th)
(*Restoration*)/ *energy drain** (7th)
*Resurrection*/ *destruction** (7th)
*Shadow engines* (7th)
*Spirit of power** (7th)
*Succor* (reversible) (7th)
*Uncontrolled weather* (7th)
*Animal horde* (quest)
*Circle of sunmotes* (quest)
*Conformance* (quest)
*Elemental swarm* (quest)
*Etherwalk* (quest)
*Highway* (quest)
*Imago interrogation* (quest)
*Planar quest* (quest)
*Revelation* (quest)
*Storm of vengeance* (quest)
*Undead plague** (quest)
*Ward matrix* (quest)

## 1st-level Spells

***Analyze balance***: In Ravenloft, no spell or magical item can reveal good or evil in a creature's alignment. When assessing how many "grades" a creature is removed from neutral, the only possible answers are 1 and 0: The spell would only detect that a creature is lawful or chaotic (1 away from neutral) or neutral (0 away from neutral). This same rule applies to analyzing the alignment of areas, objects, or anything else.

***Courage***: As noted earlier for spells in the sphere of War, a crowd of villagers can be given courage with this spell. The first time they are required to roll a morale check, they automatically pass it. This is most likely to be when they first sight the monster up close. Unfortunately for the mob, another morale check is sure to be needed if they actually fight the monster. The spell lasts until the next dawn or 12 hours, whichever is greater.

***Detect evil***: No one can detect evil magically in Ravenloft. This spell and its reverse don't work.

***Emotion read***: This spell is unchanged in Ravenloft, but the Dungeon Master should recall that self-willed undead can project a barrier of false thoughts, including emotions. In general, undead find it difficult and distasteful to project the gentler emotions of love, sympathy, compassion, etc. They tend to project neutral or negative emotions, such as anger, jealously, and hatred.

***Know age***: This spell judges the age of the physical body. In the case of many undead, this provides interesting answers. The bodies of some undead, like vampires, are arrested at the moment of their deaths. A vampire might really be 400 years old, but his body is preserved at 37. Zombies, skeletons, and the like do not have preserved bodies. The same is true for incorporeal creatures, such as ghosts and banshees. For all of these cases, the spell functions normally.

Any creature whose body has ceased aging gets a saving throw vs. spell. If successful, the spell only reports the apparent age of the body. If the saving throw fails, it reports the true age from the moment of the creature's birth.

***Morale***: As stated in *Tome of Magic*, this spell improves the morale of a unit. In Ravenloft, the most likely use is with a crowd of villagers that is storming the castle or chasing the monster. If raised by 1, the mob has a morale of 10. If raised by 3, it has a morale 12. This improvement remains in effect until the next dawn or for 12 hours, whichever is longer.

***Speak with astral traveler***: Since astral travel doesn't work in Ravenloft, there aren't any astral travelers to use this spell on. If through some outrageous quirk of domain laws an astral traveler is encountered, then the spell works normally.

***Thought capture***: This spell is similar to the metapsionic devotion *retrospection*. It maintains that there are wandering thoughts which have been set loose from their owners. In Ravenloft, such thoughts still bear the stamp of the personalities who created them, and the thoughts of the lords of the domains are stronger than others. As a result, there is a 10% chance that any *thought capture* spell gathers a thought from the darklord of the domain. If the nature of the place where the spell is cast is such that the lord of the domain visits it regularly or has great personal interest in it, the chance rises to 50%.

Such thoughts can be tainted with foul evil and horrors that should not be contemplated by ordinary mortals. Depending upon the thoughts received, the priest might have to roll a horror or madness check. Thoughts of great horror and anguish will hold the greatest emotional weight and are more likely to be picked up first.

## 2nd-level Spells

***Create holy symbol*:** This spell works normally, but the lord of the domain is instantly made aware of the fact that a holy symbol has been created somewhere in his or her domain. If the symbol is of any evil alignment, that is all the lord learns. If the symbol is of any neutral alignment, he or she can pin it down to a 10-mile–diameter area. If it is of any good alignment, the lord knows the location of the priest within a 1-mile radius. Creating an evil holy symbol warrants a Ravenloft powers check.

***Know alignment*:** Ravenloft insulates evil. As with the standard version of this spell, the target gets a saving throw to avoid detection altogether. Even if it fails, the spell can detect only chaotic, neutral, or lawful alignment; the spell *never* reveals evil or good alignment.

***Mind read*:** This spell has difficulty penetrating the barrier of false thoughts presented by self-willed undead. Although normal folk get no saving throw, self-willed undead do. If the saving throw succeeds, then the undead creature can plant whatever thoughts it wishes into the caster's mental net. If the saving throw fails, the priest penetrates the veil and is drawn into the foul depths of the creature's evil mind. He or she learns everything listed in the spell description. However, he or she must roll a madness check after experiencing the horror of the mind of an undead monster.

A madness check may also be necessary for reading the minds of some living creatures, if their minds are brimming with loathsome evil—mind flayers are an excellent example. Sometimes an undead creature chooses not to resist the spell, allowing the priest a look at things mortals were not meant to see.

***Mystic transfer*:** Unlike many spells in Ravenloft, this one is able to cross the borders that separate domains. However, the lord of either domain needs only close the borders to sever the link.

***Nap*:** This spell can negate the effects of a failed fear check, as the passage of time and a good sleep allow fear to pass. The *nap* spell is not as successful on failed horror checks, but the victim of a failed horror check is allowed a new check with the casting of this spell. It also allows a temporary respite from the "obsession" result, even if the new horror check fails. Any accumulated penalties are wiped clean by this refreshing sleep.

***Rally*:** Although designed specifically for use with the BATTLESYSTEM rules, this spell can be used with a mob or crowd of villagers. If the mob has failed a morale check (and is probably fleeing the scene) this spell might rally it. Another morale check is rolled, and if successful, the mob recovers its lost poise and is able to approach the situation again.

***Sanctify/defile*:** *Sanctify* works normally in Ravenloft. If cast in a "sinkhole of evil," the two effects cancel each other out. For the duration of the spell, neither positive or negative modifiers apply. If the area of the sinkhole exceeds the area of the spell effect, then the region not covered by the spell is still a sinkhole of evil, with the original modifiers.

*Defile* adds its bonuses to those of the sinkhole, making the place even more foul and evil. Using this version of the spell calls for a Ravenloft powers check.

## 3rd-level Spells

***Animate dead*:** This spell works almost too well in Ravenloft. Normally the caster can animate a number of skeletons or zombies approximately equal to his or her level in Hit Dice. When priests cast this spell in Ravenloft, however, they animate *twice* the usual amount. (Use the regular formula, but double the result.) The caster can add as many Hit Dice to

the monsters as desired, as long as the total is no more than twice his or her own level. Keep in mind that the undeads' Hit Dice affect their ability to be turned: Those whose Hit Dice exceed the caster's level can save vs. spell to break free of control.

The casting of this spell prompts a Ravenloft powers check.

***Astral window***: The Astral Plane is not accessible via most spells in Ravenloft. However, *astral window* does not attempt to move anything between Ravenloft and the Astral Plane. In other words, the spell works normally, but creatures cannot leave Ravenloft through the window. However, beings can still *enter* the Demiplane of Dread if they succeed in the roll described in the *Tome of Magic* entry.

***Cause disease***: The reverse of *cure disease*, this spell provokes a Ravenloft powers check.

***Choose future***: For the most part, this spell is unchanged in Ravenloft. Horror checks are not rerolled for the alternate future, however. One roll is made and it applies to both futures. (If necessary, the Dungeon Master can roll some dice to pretend that it might have been possible to get a different result.)

***Emotion control***: This spell is unchanged in Ravenloft. The *courage* option can be used to remove the effects of a failed fear check. In that case, it cancels the fear, but does not provide its normal bonuses. There is no reprieve from a failed horror check with this spell.

***Feign death***: This spell calls for the caster to make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Helping hand***: This ghostly hand is unable to cross the borders of a domain. If the person or creature is in a different domain than the caster, the hand is unable to find him, her, or it.

***Negative plane protection***: Ravenloft insulates undead from the influence of other planes. The attacking undead monster suffers only 1d6 points of damage when this spell is cast, but it can attempt to save vs. death magic for no damage at all.

***Remove curse/bestow curse***: *Remove curse* works poorly in Ravenloft, where its duration is limited rather than permanent. The target of this magic can successfully save vs. spell to temporarily be rid of a curse, but the duration of relief is one turn per level of the spellcaster. Curses are very powerful in Ravenloft (see Chapter V). The stronger the curse, the less likely it is that a mere spell can suspend it. Use the table below to find the saving throw modifier for the power of the curse.

*Bestow curse* works as described, but it requires a Ravenloft powers check with the following modifiers (expressed as positive percentage values in the subtable below).

| Curse | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Embarrassing | 0 |
| Frustrating | –1 (+1%) |
| Troublesome | –2 (+2%) |
| Dangerous | –3 (+3%) |
| Lethal | –6 (+6%) |

***Speak with dead***: This spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

## 4th-level Spells

***Abjure***: Normally this spell sends creatures from the Outer Planes back to their homes. The spell's chance of success is 50%, plus (or minus) 5% for each positive (or negative) difference in level between the caster and the target. If this spell succeeds in Ravenloft, the creature is only sent to another random location in the demiplane, *not* to its home plane.

***Call woodland beings***: The fairy folk listed in the *Player's Handbook* do not inhabit any of the

# VI: SPELLS IN RAVENLOFT

known domains of Ravenloft. Furthermore, the lord of the domain in which the spell is cast controls the spell's results. The lord can send any creature in his or her land to answer the summons. Of course, the being will obey the lord's instruction and not the caster's.

***Dimensional folding***: This spell cannot connect areas in different domains. The priest is unable to fold the demiplane to connect to any area outside the domain where the spell was cast.

***Focus***: Most domain lords are able to detect the casting of a *focus* spell. They know that one has been cast somewhere in their domain, but they do not know exactly where. A focus devoted to an evil alignment does not give away any more information than that. A focus devoted to a neutral alignment can be identified within 1 mile of its true location. One of good alignment is pinned down to within 100 yards.

Not all domain lords can detect the presence of foci in their domains. Darklords that are steeped in the arcane lore of magic tend to have this power, as do those of strong supernatural origin. However, lords of more normal or mortal backgrounds are usually incapable of detecting a focus any better than their subjects. For example, Strahd von Zarovich, Azalin, or Harkon Lukas could almost certainly detect a focus. On the other hand, Vlad Drakov and Ivana Boritsi could not.

The *focus* spell (as listed in the *Tome of Magic*) contains only good effects that can be built into the focus. Some spells listed are reversible, and those effects are also valid. The subtable below lists spells affected.

**✣ Spells Affected by *Focus* Subtable ✣**

*Accelerate healing*
*Anti-vermin barrier*
*Aura of comfort*
*Bless/curse**
*Calm chaos*
*Cure blindness/cause blindness**
*Cure disease/cause disease**
*Detect lie/undetectable lie*
*Dispel evil/dispel good**
*Efficacious monster ward*
*Elemental forbiddance*
*Emotion control*†
*Know alignment/undetectable alignment*
*Land of stability*
*Protection from evil/protection from good**
*Purify food & drink/putrefy food & drink**
*Remove fear/cause fear**
*Slow rot*
*Tongues/babble*
*True seeing/false seeing*
*Undead ward*
*Zone of sweet air*
*Zone of truth*

* Creating a focus from the spell is cause for a Ravenloft powers check, but using the reverses of these spells is *not* cause for a check. Creating a focus devoted to an evil deity, regardless of the *focus* spell, also warrants a Ravenloft powers check.

† A single emotion must be specified.

***Join with astral traveler***: This spell simply doesn't work in Ravenloft, which lies in the Ethereal Plane, wholly unconnected to the Astral.

***Leadership/doubt***: The BATTLESYSTEM game use for *leadership* is inappropriate for Ravenloft. However, the priest can single out a person in a mob and make him or her into a leader. This new leader could then conduct the mob in search of the monster. The presence of the leader grants the mob a +1 morale bonus. Should the leader die during the hunt, the mob

must immediately roll a morale check. Refer to the "the sphere of War" section (page 67) for more information about mobs and crowds of villagers.

*Doubt* removes leadership qualities from a person. If successfully cast upon the leader of a mob, the mob must immediately roll a morale check. Even if the check succeeds, the mob no longer gets the bonus for having a leader. It is able to attack an immediately visible target, but if there is no obvious path or target for their rage, the mob disperses.

***Modify memory***: This spell is capable of negating the effects of a failed fear or horror check. This is done either by wiping the memory of the event from the person or by altering his or her memory so that the horror of the situation is masked.

This spell can be used for sinister effect as well. It can force a person to relive a scene that was originally cause for a horror check, so the victim reacts as if he or she were really there. If a previous horror check for that situation failed, then the results of that check may come back to haunt him or her. For example, if the result had been "aversion," the character feels the need to run in horror. If the previous check succeeded, he or she must roll a new horror check, with a bonus for having survived the scene before (see Chapter III).

Making a person relive a scene of horror for the express purpose of making him or her fail the check is cause for a powers check.

***Probability control***: This spell cannot alter the probabilities or effects of a fear or horror check. It operates only on the chances of success of an action taken by a creature. Since fear and horror checks are not actions, but *reactions*, this spell has no effect upon them.

***Rapport***: Of course, self-willed undead have the ability to raise a barrier of false thoughts. If such a creature chooses to enter into a rapport with a priest, it has a choice: It can feed innocent thoughts and emotions via the barrier, or it can allow the priest a true glimpse of its malevolent inner self.

Any normal person who gets a close look at the twisted mind of a self-willed undead monster must make a madness check. For this reason, it is not uncommon for the undead monster to allow a priest access to its mind, knowing what the effects are likely to be. Since the participants in a rapport choose which thoughts and emotions to share, the undead creature need not reveal anything of importance.

***Reflecting pool***: Instead of offering a window to another plane or grounded setting, the spell creates an image of swirling mists, and the priest actually sees a specific location in the Mists of Ravenloft. There is a 10% chance that something horrid will appear briefly within the image while the priest is looking, prompting a horror check.

***Thought broadcast***: Any self-willed undead creature subjected to this spell broadcasts only false thoughts. It has total control over these thoughts and can make them be anything, even the opposite of its true thoughts.

Those within range of the spell may be forced to make fear, horror, or madness checks at the Dungeon Master's discretion, depending upon the nature of the subject's mind or thoughts.

***Weather stasis***: The effects of this spell cannot override the lord of the domain's control of the weather. The darklord may choose to let the spell work normally, however.

## 5th-level Spells

***Commune***: Since Ravenloft is effectively cut off from the rest of the multiverse, this spell is ineffective in the Demiplane of Dread.

***Dispel evil*/dispel good:** Normally this spell can return creatures summoned by evil to their home plane, but the dark and deadly creatures of Ravenloft cannot be dispatched so easily. The spell does remove evil enchantments, however. The same restriction apply to the reverse of the spell.

***Magic font*:** This spell has the same results as *reflecting pool*, above: It reveals a random location in the Mists, with a 10% chance that an appalling monster will wander into view, prompting a horror check.

***Plane shift*:** This spell transports the character to a different domain within Ravenloft. It cannot help anyone or anything escape the entire demiplane's clutches.

***Quest*:** Normally a target who doesn't follow a *quest* suffers a –1 penalty to all saving throws, which are cumulative over time. In Ravenloft, the caster can assign another punishment for not following the assigned quest. The punishment cannot be too severe or be life-threatening, but it must slowly worsen each day the quest is ignored. Likewise, following the quest should gradually cancel the punishment. For example, a character might shrink 10% in height each day he or she violates the quest (based on current measurements). Each day the character returns to the quest, he or she regains one day of shrinkage.

***Raise dead/slay living*:** If the target of a *raise dead* spell fails his or her resurrection survival roll, he or she becomes an undead creature of a type equal in Hit Dice to former level. (Table 1: Turning Undead, on page 27 and on the DM screen, lists monsters by Hit Dice.) Vampires are the most powerful creatures *raise dead* can create in this fashion. Vampires retain any abilities they had as living characters.

Casting this spell (or its reverse, *slay living*) requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***True seeing*:** When priests detect alignment with this spell, they discern only law or chaos, not good or evil. (See *know alignment*, above.) Otherwise, the spell functions as described in the *Player's Handbook*, with the following clarifications:

The spellcaster sees through illusions and apparitions. "Apparitions" does not mean ghosts or other intangible beings—they're real although not physical. Undead creatures of this ilk do not appear differently under this spell. If they look like normal people, this spell usually does not change the caster's perception.

Polymorphed, changed, or enchanted things become apparent. A lycanthrope in animal form is not considered polymorphed, nor is a vampire or similar creature with natural shapechanging abilities. As a general rule, if changing shape is part of the creature's nature, this spell does not reveal the change. "Polymorphed" must involve spellcasting or the use of a spell-like ability.

An "enchanted" creature is under some sort of controlling spell such as *charm* or *geas*. These spell effects are revealed by *true seeing*. Vampires and lycanthropes control animal troops through enchantment, but they do not control subservient creatures of their own kind this way. Rather, master vampires and lycanthropes often dominate underlings with personality alone.

## 6th-level Spells

***Age creature*:** Any humanoid killed by this spell must roll a saving throw vs. spell. If it fails, he or she becomes a ghost. Intentionally killing a person with this spell is cause for a Ravenloft powers check. The reverse of this spell, *restore youth*, is unchanged in the Demiplane of Dread.

***Conjure fire elemental/dismiss fire elemental*:** A conjured elemental cannot leave Ravenloft by means of *dismiss fire elemental* or any similar spell. It must find its own escape

from the demiplane, just like the player characters. Also, the summoned creature is more difficult to control in Ravenloft. Upon arriving, it saves vs. spell with a –2 penalty; a successful roll means it can act freely. This does not mean the elemental automatically attacks the priest who summoned it, but that's a distinct possibility.

***Find the path*:** This spell only functions within a domain; it cannot find locations outside it. If the domain is bordered by Mists, the caster can focus on them to reach the border. The spell still provides an escape from *maze* spells and helps the caster bypass traps. As stated in the *Player's Handbook*, it does not predict or allow for the actions of hostile creatures.

Some exits from the demiplane are physical locations. If such an exit is within the domain, this spell can guide the caster to it, provided the caster knows the nature of the exit and it is present when the spell is cast. In this case, the spell lasts only one round per level of the caster. Some portals appear only under specific conditions. If they are not present when the spell is cast, *find the path* has no effect.

***The great circle/the black circle*:** Undead are stronger in Ravenloft than on other planes and in other realms. *The great circle* has a reduced effect in the Demiplane of Dread: Any undead with 6 Hit Dice or fewer in the area of effect are destroyed. All other undead suffer 1d6 points of damage per priest in the circle. Creatures of evil alignment suffer 1d4 points of damage per priest in the circle. In both cases the creatures may roll a saving throw vs. death to halve the damage.

*The black circle* works as described in the *Tome of Magic*. However, casting it is cause for a powers check for each priest in the circle.

***Group mind*:** This spell is based upon the *rapport* spell (see above). The same limitations for that spell apply to *group mind*. Basically, anyone who experiences the inner workings of the mind of a self-willed undead creature must roll a madness check.

***Land of stability*:** This spell plays second fiddle to the lord of the domain's control of the land, but the lord may decide to let the spell work normally. If his or her defined powers specify control over the land or any effects described in the spell, he or she can override the effects of this spell at will. (Ravenloft gives its cherished few great powers within their domains.)

***Sol's searing orb*:** The light from this spell is considered to be the equivalent of daylight. Vampires and other creatures affected by daylight are harmed by this spell as if they were standing outside on a bright summer day for a fraction of a round.

***Word of recall*:** This spell works normally, with one exception: It cannot transport the character between planes.

## 7th-level Spells

***Astral spell*:** As Ravenloft lies in the Ethereal Plane and is cut off from the rest of the multiverse anyway, this spell doesn't work.

***Breath of death*:** This spell, the reverse of *breath of life*, forces the caster to make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Conjure earth elemental*:** Same as *conjure fire elemental*. See above.

***Energy drain*:** This spell, the reverse of *restoration*, prompts a powers check.

***Gate*:** The gate leads in, but not out; the summoned creature cannot leave Ravenloft automatically. Instead, the creature must find an exit, just like any other being. This entrapment often infuriates the monster, provoking an attack on the caster and any companions.

The caster ages five years and must make a powers check when casting this spell.

***Holy word/unholy word*:** Casters can use either version of this spell only on their home planes. Hence, player characters cannot use *holy word* in Ravenloft, nor can they be driven from the demiplane by its reverse. Any native of Ravenloft can cast this spell. If a caster attempts to force creatures from the demiplane, however, the creatures are randomly transported to another location in Ravenloft. The creatures cannot come within sight of the caster for a full day.

Characters who cast *unholy word* must make a powers check.

***Reincarnation*:** In Ravenloft this spell may actually reincarnate a person as an undead creature. The chance of this occurring is 1% per level of the caster. The person becomes a monster type whose Hit Dice are equal to the character's former experience level. (See Table 1: Turning Undead (on page 27 and on the Dungeon Master screen; it lists monsters by Hit Dice.) Like *raise dead*, above, this spell cannot create undead more powerful than vampires. Vampires retain any abilities they had in life, and they may still look like normal people.

Casting this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Resurrection/destruction*:** See *raise dead* above; the effects are the same. The spell and its reverse, *destruction*, require a powers check.

***Shadow engines*:** When this spell expires, is cancelled, or is disrupted for any reason, there is a 50% chance that a small horde of real shadows (as in the monsters—see the *Monstrous Manual*) rises up from the shattered illusions. The roll is made for each engine as it dissipates. Each engine spawns 2d8 shadows, which have no loyalty or particular hatred for

the priest, but they are definitely not under his or her control.

***Spirit of power*:** This spell enables several priests of high level to call down an avatar of their deity. To date, this spell has never been attempted in Ravenloft. It is certain that the deity has the ability to send its avatar and make the spell work normally. What is not certain is whether the avatar can return. Ravenloft's one-way gates make this an interesting question. No deity would ever agree to let an avatar become trapped in Ravenloft.

An unspoken law of nonintervention by the powers of the multiverse makes it unlikely that any deity, good or evil, would ever allow its avatar into the demiplane. They *could* do so, but they have always chosen not to. The reasons for this are unclear.

Even attempting to summon the avatar of an evil deity is cause for a powers check.

***Succor*:** This spell cannot transport anyone or anything out of Ravenloft. Otherwise, it works as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

***Uncontrolled weather*:** The lord of a domain is sometimes able to control weather, or at least exert certain influences upon it. If that lord's control is at odds with this spell, the darklord automatically wins. In many cases, though, he or she does not bother to contest the spell.

## Quest Spells

***Animal horde*:** Some domain lords can control the animals of their lands, or at least some species. Any of those not under the control of a darklord is allowed to answer the summons of this spell. However, the darklord's control always takes precedence over that of the spell. The lord frequently allows the animals to answer the summons, though, to find out what the priest is up to. Once he or she knows, the darklord may or may not choose to override the priest's hold on the animals.

***Circle of sunmotes*:** The light from the motes is capable of harming creatures vulnerable to normal sunlight. Vulnerable vampires would be completely destroyed if exposed to the sunmotes for a full round.

***Conformance*:** This spell does not affect the chances of horror checks. However, fear checks are reduced to a simple "it-happens" or "it-doesn't-happen" result.

***Elemental swarm*:** At the end of this spell's duration, summoned elementals are unable to return to home, which tends to infuriate them. Since the spell has expired, the priest no longer has any control over them, and the rest is left to the Dungeon Master's imagination.

***Etherwalk*:** This spell transports the priest and his or her party into the Border Ethereal—that part of the spell works normally. Once there, however, the priest and company will find themselves unable to travel any deeper into the Ethereal Plane. They can choose to re-enter Ravenloft at any time, though.

***Highway*:** This spell cannot cross the borders between domains if they are closed.

***Imago interrogation*:** This spell enables the priest to travel the planes, and even through time, in spirit form. In Ravenloft he or she is limited to the demiplane, although time is not a barrier. Further, if the borders to a domain are closed, the caster cannot cross them.

***Planar quest*:** This spell is severely restricted in Ravenloft. There are only three planes that have sufficient connections to the Demiplane of Dread to effect this spell—the Border Ethereal Plane, the Demiplane of Shadow, and the Negative Energy Plane. Even those planes do not allow the traveler from Ravenloft to do anything more than walk their shores—the traveler must remain on the fringes of these planes forever or else return to Ravenloft.

***Revelation***: Even when using this spell, the priest is unable to discern good or evil in Ravenloft. All of the restrictions for the *true seeing* spell apply to this one as well.

***Storm of vengeance***: The power of a domain lord to control the weather takes precedence over any spell. If the darklord has the power to control the weather, he or she can calm this storm automatically.

***Undead plague***: This spell works far better in Ravenloft than on the Prime Material Plane. The area of effect is 40,000 square yards, an area 200 yards per side. This translates to 4,000 skeletons. The skeletons are turned as zombies, but remember to use the RAVENLOFT campaign setting's Turning Undead Table (see page 27).

Casting this spell is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

***Ward matrix***: This spell is able to join distant wards into a network so that each experiences the cumulative effects of all the wards. In Ravenloft, this spell cannot breach the borders of a domain. Only wards in the same domain as the caster can be included in the matrix.

## Wizard Magic

A wizard who casts certain conjuration or summoning spells may find the results limited by circumstance. Animals and enchanted creatures can be summoned only if they exist in the domain occupied by the wizard. If the description for a given domain does not indicate which animals live there, assume the local fauna includes everything of similar habitats in other realms.

Ravenloft is cut off from the rest of the multiverse, which creates a problem for wizards who attempt to summon planar creatures. In general, a creature still responds to a *summoning*, but it is often unfriendly and is rarely what the wizard summoned.

Certain spells, particularly some of the necromantic ones, are more effective in Ravenloft. Be warned though, that casting such spells with abandon can affect the caster.

**Elementalist wizards:** The elemental wizard does not use newly discovered spells as much as he or she uses the old spells in a new fashion. Instead of organizing them by school, he or she thinks in terms of nature's elements: Earth, Water, Air, and Fire. Of all the new practitioners of the art, he or she suffers the fewest changes in the land of the Mists.

**Metamagic:** Spells affecting other spells—that's the main thrust of metamagic. These things have little to do with the concerns of the dark powers. Hence, these spells are scarcely changed in Ravenloft.

**Wild mages:** This breed of sorcerer seeks the theoretical underpinnings of magic. Wild mages are as interested in how magic works as they are in using it. They have discovered the secrets of chaos and are able to use the principles of uncertainty to chart a steady course through the arcane arts.

Recently, a wild mage was invited to sup with Count von Zarovich. From her the vampire extracted many secrets concerning this new art. The abilities of wild mages are unchanged in Ravenloft, but as Strahd's guest learned, their spells have been affected by the Mists.

It is important to remember that the rules of Ravenloft take precedence over the effects of wild surges. A wild surge can never remove a curse or undo the effects of a failed Ravenloft powers check. It cannot enable the wild mage to magically distinguish good from evil, or the negate the ability of self-willed undead to disguise themselves mentally, or allow characters to walk the planes, etc. Any wild surge that would detrimentally affect a darklord has a 50% chance to affect a different target instead. Annoyance effects or beneficial effects of wild surges work as usual in Ravenloft.

## Altered Wizard Spells

The table below lists common wizard spells with altered effects in Ravenloft. Spells immediately followed by an asterisk (*) require a Ravenloft powers check (see Chapter IV). A description of changes to each spell follows the table, supporting the text in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Tome of Magic*. For more convenient referencing, the reverse of a spell is listed beside its counterpart (following a slash). If either version of the spell works normally in Ravenloft, it appears in parentheses.

**✣ Table 12: Altered Wizard Spells ✣**

*Chill touch** (1st)
*Conjure spell component* (1st)
*Detect undead* (1st)
*Find familiar* (1st)
*Metamorphose liquids* (1st)
*Detect evil/detect good* (2nd)
*ESP* (2nd)
*Know alignment/ (undetectable alignment)* (2nd)
*Nahal's nonsensical nullifier* (2nd)
*Spectral hand** (2nd)
*Alternate reality* (3rd)
*Clairaudience* (3rd)
*Clairvoyance* (3rd)
*Feign death** (3rd)
*Hold undead* (3rd)
*Lorloveim's creeping shadow** (3rd)
*Monster summoning I* (3rd)
*Vampiric touch** (3rd)
*Contagion** (4th)
*Enervation** (4th)
*Locate creature* (4th)
*Magic mirror* (4th)
*Mask of death* (4th)
*Monster summoning II* (4th)
*Remove curse/bestow curse** (4th)
*Summon lycanthrope** (4th)
*Animate dead** (5th)
*Conjure elemental* (5th)
*Contact other plane* (5th)
*Dismissal* (5th)
*Khazid's procurement* (5th)
*Magic jar** (5th)
*Monster summoning III* (5th)
*Summon shadow** (5th)
*Teleport* (5th)
*Bloodstone's spectral steed** (6th)
*Conjure animals* (6th)
*Death spell** (6th)
*Ensnarement* (6th)
*Geas* (6th)
*Lorloveim's shadowy transformation** (6th)
*Monster summoning IV* (6th)
*Reincarnation** (6th)
*True seeing* (6th)
*Banishment* (7th)
*Bloodstone's frightful joining** (7th)
*Control undead* (7th)
*Finger of death** (7th)
*Limited wish* (7th)
*Monster summoning V* (7th)
*Shadowcat* (7th)
*Shadow walk* (7th)
*Teleport without error* (7th)
*Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting** (8th)
*Hornung's random dispatcher* (8th)
*Monster summoning VI* (8th)
*Astral spell* (9th)
*Energy drain** (9th)
*Estate transference* (9th)
*Gate** (9th)
*Monster summoning VII* (9th)
*Succor* (reversible) (9th)
*Wail of the banshee** (9th)
*Wish* (9th)

## 1st-level Spells

***Chill touch*:** This spell is more deadly when cast in Ravenloft. If the victim fails a saving throw, the touch inflicts 2d4 points of damage and drains 1 point of Strength *and* Constitution. If the target successfully saves vs. spell, the touch inflicts 1d4 points of damage and drains 1 point of Strength.

Casting this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Conjure spell component*:** This spell cannot retrieve components from outside the domain where it is cast. The wizard is not made aware that this is the reason for spell failure.

***Detect undead*:** In Ravenloft, each undead creature can make a saving throw vs. this spell. If four or more similar creatures are grouped together, they make a single roll with a –2 penalty. A natural roll of 20 always indicates a successful save. As stated in the *Player's Handbook*, the spell cannot penetrate stone more than 1 foot thick (i.e., most castle walls).

***Find familiar*:** Only wizards of evil alignment can find a familiar in Ravenloft. Lawful evil wizards have a 10% chance per level of the caster of summoning an imp. Wizards of chaotic evil alignment have a 10% chance per level (90% maximum) of summoning a quasit.

***Metamorphose liquids*:** This spell is unchanged in Ravenloft. However, a special note needs to be made about vampires. Changing water into blood can be done, but the vampire cannot sustain itself in this way in Ravenloft. Such blood lacks the vital component of the owner's life force, which the vampire requires. Drinking blood made with this spell causes the vampire to vomit 1d4 turns later.

In fact, any evil creature that sustains itself

solely on fluids from a living creature suffers like the vampire. For example, if a strange form of lycanthrope is encountered—one that must drink spinal fluid to survive—this spell cannot provide sustenance for it. Normal creatures can still draw nourishment from water or other fluids created by this spell.

## 2nd-level Spells

***Detect evil***: No one can detect evil magically in Ravenloft. This spell and its reverse, *detect good*, simply don't work.

***ESP***: Unlike undead in other realms, those unliving creatures in Ravenloft with "low" Intelligence or better can choose to project their thoughts. *ESP* can reveal such thoughts. Projected thoughts are usually safe, friendly, and reassuring, because that serves the creature best. A creature who is unaware or caught by surprise cannot project its thoughts. Wizards are not aware of this spell's altered effects when they cast it.

At the Dungeon Master's discretion, an evil creature may choose to project thoughts so horrid that the caster must make a madness check.

***Know alignment***: As usual, the target of this spell gets a saving throw to avoid detection. Failure means the spell detects chaotic, neutral, or lawful alignment—never good or evil.

***Nahal's nonsensical nullifier***: This spell scrambles detection spell results. In Ravenloft, only the lawful and chaotic portions of alignment can be detected. After this spell has scrambled the detected alignment, the lawful and chaotic portions are still the only parts of the alignment reported.

***Spectral hand***: This necromantic spell lasts twice as long in Ravenloft, and the caster must make a powers check.

## 3rd-level Spells

***Alternate reality***: The dark powers hold sway over reality in this demiplane. As a result, die rolls that are unique to Ravenloft are largely unaffected by this spell. Fear, horror, madness, and Ravenloft powers checks cannot be changed from failed rolls into successful ones (though the Dungeon Master can feign rerolling). However, the secondary die rolls determining the precise results of these failed checks can be rerolled.

For example, a character who fails a horror check ends up obsessed with the scene that caused the check. He or she casts this spell to get a new horror check roll. The rerolled horror check automatically fails (although the Dungeon Master rolls a die to fool the player). If that same character had cast the spell to affect the result of the horror check, however, he or she might end up with an aversion rather than an obsession.

***Clairaudience***: According to the *Player's Handbook*, this spell allows the caster to hear noises in a familiar or obvious place. A "familiar" place is one the wizard has visited personally. Verbal descriptions and viewing through spells or pictures do not make a place completely familiar. If a wizard has this kind of partial information, the spell has only a 50% chance to work. Roll once per location, failure being permanent until the wizard gathers more information.

An "obvious" place is one directly connected to the scene before the caster. If the wizard sees a door, he or she can cast the spell on the other side of the door. He or she cannot cast it around the corner and through the door, however.

*Clairaudience* normally creates an invisible sensor that can be magically dispelled. In Ravenloft, the sensor is a ghostly ear of normal size, which is visible. If detected, the ear can be dispelled, or the parties involved can adjust their speech to compensate.

This spell is limited to a single mist-bound region, which may include more than one domain. The Mists act as a planar boundary. The spell does not work in the Mists themselves; they distort location and distance.

The caster is not immediately aware of the changes to this spell.

***Clairvoyance***: This spell is restricted like *clairaudience*. The formerly invisible sensor becomes a visible, ghostly eye of normal size—without the caster's knowledge. The spell is limited to a single mist-bound area, and does not work in the Mists. A gaze attack on the sensor can affect the caster. For example, a vampire might *charm* a wizard who has cast a *clairvoyance* spell.

***Feign death***: The caster of this spell must make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Hold undead***: Undead monsters strongly resist this type of magic in Ravenloft. All undead—even mindless ones—can avoid its effects with a successful save vs. spell. Undead that are self-willed add a +2 bonus to their saving throw. The lord of any domain is completely immune to this spell.

***Lorloveim's creeping shadow***: The essence of this spell is to animate the caster's shadow and be able to see through its eyes and hear through its ears. Manipulating the stuff of shadows is dangerous in Ravenloft. The shadows sometimes take on a life of their own.

The Dungeon Master secretly rolls a saving throw vs. spell for the caster on the round the spell is cast. If it succeeds, nothing happens and the caster may be unaware that it was even possible for something unusual to happen. If the saving throw fails, then the shadow is animated.

There are two ways that a shadow might be animated, with an equal chance of either manifesting. Once animated (either way), it remains so until killed. The caster also loses his or her real shadow until that time. Seeing a person without a shadow is rather spooky, and nonplayer characters are likely to think the worst about a character without one.

The first way the shadow may be animated, and probably the one most anticipated by the characters, is to become a monster (see "Shadow" in the *Monstrous Manual*). Such a monster will seek to kill the caster, but not necessarily immediately. It is more likely to follow him or her around and wait for the best opportunity. The shadow is more than willing to flee if it's in danger of being destroyed. Of course, if it is attacked it will defend itself.

The second way the shadow may become animated is to suck the caster's personality into it while a shadow monster inhabits the caster's fleshly body. Then the creature in possession of the wizard's body will attempt to kill the shadow player character. Further, the creature will attempt to enlist the help of other player characters.

Since the other players might detect the transpossession immediately, Dungeon Master's should have the affected character's player keep control of that player character for the first day. That night, the shadow monster runs away with the body. The player now plays a shadow in search of his or her body. Of course, since the shadow can't talk, the player character might have some problem convincing the other characters that he or she is not a monster. Meanwhile, the monster player character must roll a system shock roll each day. If the roll fails, he or she becomes a shadow forever, and the player must roll up a new character. In fact, if the hapless player character fails any other Ravenloft powers check in the course of the game, the same fate befalls, requiring a new player character.

***Monster summoning I***: Only monsters native to the region can be summoned. Refer to the encounter tables in the domains section of the *Domains and Denizens* book to determine what shows up. Monsters resist control in Ravenloft,

and they can save vs. spell with a –2 penalty to avoid the summons. If the summoned monsters are minions of the lord, the creatures still appear, but the lord retains control of them all.

***Vampiric touch***: Ravenloft enhances the effects of this spell. For every die of damage inflicted, the victim permanently loses 1 hit point unless a priest successfully casts a *restoration* spell. For example, a 7th-level wizard touches a warrior with this spell. The warrior suffers 3d6 points of damage and loses 3 hit points permanently. Only a *restoration* spell can return those 3 hit points.

The caster of this spell must make a Ravenloft powers check.

## 4th-level Spells

***Contagion***: The caster of this spell must make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Enervation***: This spell is quite deadly in Ravenloft. Each level drained from the victim also drains 1 hit point permanently. For example, if a succession of these spells causes a character to lose three levels, he or she also loses 3 hit points permanently. Only a *restoration* spell can bring back those lost points.

Casting this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Locate creature***: This spell is unable to cross the misty borders that separate one domain from another. A creature on the other side of such a border cannot be detected by the caster, even if he or she is within normal range. The lord of a domain always gets a saving throw vs. spell to avoid being found by this spell.

***Magic mirror***: Although it doesn't work in the Mists themselves, the magic mirror can view a location within a single, mist-bound region. The mirror still acts as a scrying device, but a ghostly mirror with the caster's face appears at the location seen by the caster. A gaze attack (see the *DMG*) can be made into this ghostly image, affecting the caster. The caster is not immediately aware of the changes to this spell.

***Mask of death***: This spell normally enables the caster to alter the features of a dead body to resemble another person. In Ravenloft, the intrepid adventurer should not dabble too readily with the dead. The caster must roll a saving throw vs. death magic; failure indicates that he or she takes on the features of the dead body—if the body is in an obvious state of decay, then the caster will look like a zombie. The spellcaster is unaware of this change, and unless he or she looks in a mirror or someone says something, he or she will notice nothing.

If *animate dead* is cast upon a corpse after its features have been altered, the caster must roll a Ravenloft powers check, but there is an additional effect if the altered, animated corpse

has been given the appearance of someone who is already dead: The corpse becomes a wight, animated by the spirit of the dead person. The wight is unlikely to be pleased at returning from the dead, into someone else's body, even if it does look like its own.

***Monster summoning II***: See *monster summoning I*, above.

***Remove curse/bestow curse***: See the 3rd-level priest spell of the same name.

***Summon lycanthrope***: For this spell to work, the caster and the lycanthrope must be within the same domain in Ravenloft. The lord of a domain can be summoned in this manner only if he or she allows it. Upon arrival, the lycanthrope lord of the domain is not bound by the magical circle, although he or she may pretend to be so for a time.

Once summoned, a lycanthrope has a base chance to break the imprisoning circle. In Ravenloft, the base chance is 50%, plus (or minus) the difference in level/Hit Dice between the caster and the lycanthrope, adding or subtracting the difference in level/Hit Dice.

Summoning a lycanthrope is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

## 5th-level Spells

***Animate dead***: See the 3rd-level priest spell of the same name.

***Conjure elemental***: The dark powers severely restrict access to other planes. The elemental can arrive, but it cannot leave unless it finds a normal exit. In addition, there is a 20% chance that the spell will bring a Ravenloft elemental to the caster (see the RAVENLOFT appendix of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM). All summoned creatures are more difficult to control in this demiplane. On the first round of summoning, the creature can save vs. spell with a –2 penalty; success means the creature avoids control. Otherwise, the spell works as described in the *Player's Handbook*.

***Contact other plane***: This spell opens a conduit to the lord of the domain. The caster knows only that he or she has contacted a powerful, malevolent force. Contact lasts one round for every two levels of the caster. The lord is not forced to answer truthfully, nor is he or she forced to answer at all. Role-play any conversation. No attacks can be made through the contact, but the lord discovers the caster's approximate location (within 2 miles). Unless he or she would clearly do so, there is a 50% chance that the lord will dispatch minions to seek out and attack the wizard.

The base chance of insanity is 30% (see the spell description in the *PHB*). Subtract 5% for every point of Intelligence of the caster over 15.

***Dismissal***: Such an easy exit from Ravenloft is not permitted. The creature can still save vs. spell to avoid dismissal, provided it does not want to leave. If the save fails, or the creature wishes to leave, there is a 50% chance that the spell will teleport the target to some random location in the demiplane. Otherwise, the spell has no effect.

***Khazid's procurement***: This spell will not enable a gate to be opened beyond the borders of the wizard's current domain. If the ingredient does not exist in that domain (Dungeon Master's call), then the spell fails.

***Magic jar***: This spell undergoes a small but deadly change in Ravenloft. If the host's body is slain, the caster does not necessarily return to the magic jar. The caster must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or be bound to the host's corpse. If the roll succeeds, the spell works normally. If it fails, the wizard becomes an undead monster occupying the host's body, which the Dungeon Master controls completely.

Specifically, the following occurs when the caster becomes undead: The corpse of the host lies in peaceful death for a full day. Then, if the corpse is still relatively whole, it is animated with the caster's life force. If it is not relatively whole, the wizard dies. "Relatively whole" usually means the head and torso are intact. The caster, when undead, retains the powers he or she had in life, excluding physical abilities. He or she assumes the physical abilities of the host's body, but does not retain powers antithetical to an undead state—healing touch, plant growth, or protection from evil, for example. (The Dungeon Master's best judgment applies here.) In addition, the caster receives the usual powers of an undead creature. He or she is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, and other mind-control spells, and never needs sleep, food, drink, or even air. He or she also is immune to cold-based damage. Depending on the Hit Dice of the host body, the subject may receive other powers as well; consult the subtable below.

| Hit Dice | Special Power |
|---|---|
| 4 or fewer | No additional powers |
| 5–7 | Energy drain touch |
| 8–11 | Regenerates 1 hp each round |
| 11+ | Fear aura (40-foot radius) |

The special powers above are cumulative. Hence, a 12-HD monster would enjoy all three powers. The aura of fear automatically affects creatures with less than 4 Hit Dice, but those with 4 to 6 Hit Dice can make a saving throw.

The caster's original body also becomes an undead creature, which is under the control of the undead host. This creature is weaker than the one created from the host's body; it has only half as many Hit Dice as the caster had levels in life, to a maximum of 10 Hit Dice. Table 1: Turning Undead (see page 27 or the Dungeon Master screen) lists monster types by Hit Dice. For example, a 13th-level wizard would become a 6-HD monster. According to the table, a 6-HD undead monster is a wraith, but the Dungeon Master can choose a different undead creature of the same Hit Dice if desired.

The *magic jar* spell undergoes another important change in Ravenloft: The life force of the host, contained in the magic jar, does not depart when the caster's own life force is bound to the host's body. Instead, the host's life force becomes trapped in the jar, held there by the dark powers themselves. The powers of this trapped life force are unknown, but it is said the force may fester and grow within its prison, attaining powers that allow it to reach out from the jar and perhaps eventually escape. When the magic jar is destroyed, the life force within it is destroyed, too.

***Monster summoning III***: Same as *monster summoning I*, above.

***Summon shadow***: Each shadow can make a saving throw vs. spell upon arriving, with a –2 penalty. If the roll succeeds, the shadow is not under the control of the caster.

The caster of this spell must make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Teleport***: This spell cannot transport characters across the boundary of a domain or out of Ravenloft.

## 6th-level Spells

***Bloodstone's spectral steed***: The sight of the spectral steed causes 0-level humans or other nonclassed characters to roll a fear check. (The caster is not required to roll a check since he or she summoned it.) Anyone seeing it within 30 feet must roll a horror check. (Once again, the wizard who cast the spell need not check.)

Upon casting this spell, the wizard must roll a saving throw vs. spell. If it fails, the creature solidifies and becomes an undead creature. Visually it is indistinguishable from the spell form. It is, in effect, a Strahd's skeletal steed (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM,

vol. 3 [2153], available in November 1994, or consult the original RAVENLOFT *Realm of Terror* boxed set), capable of flying at a rate of 24(C). The beast still looks like a skeletal vulture, but the hoof/hoof/bite attack of Strahd's skeletal steed translates to a claw/claw/beak attack in this vulture form. It retains an animal-level intelligence and is not at all controlled by the wizard.

The undead creature has only one goal: to kill the wizard that caused its tortured existence. However, it will not attack immediately if the party appears to be strong and well prepared. Instead, it will try to flee and then follow the wizard at a distance, for years if necessary, awaiting the perfect moment to strike. Of course, if it is attacked it immediately defends itself.

The caster of this spell is subject to a Ravenloft powers check.

***Conjure animals***: Only animals native to the domain or region can be created. Otherwise, the spell works normally.

***Death spell***: Three days after casting this spell, if the corpses are relatively whole (head and torso mostly complete), there is a 10% chance they will become zombies. Each zombie will have half the Hit Dice of its former, mortal life. At the Dungeon Master's discretion, unusually powerful personalities may become other types of undead.

Casting this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Ensnarement***: This spell normally brings a creature from the Outer Planes to the caster and ensnares it. According to the spell, the creature can leave after performing one service. Since Ravenloft does not allow visitors to escape so easily, the creature cannot leave the demiplane unless it finds its own exit.

In Ravenloft, this spell can sometimes bring a creature from within the demiplane itself. Instead of creating a conduit to an Outer Plane, it creates a gate near the lord of the domain, who can choose to send a minion in response to the spell. The percentage chance of this twist equals the level of the caster.

It is more difficult to control a summoned creature in Ravenloft. The creature's base chance of escaping a warding circle doubles, so a hand-drawn circle has a 40% base chance to fail, and inlaid or carved circles have a 20% base chance of failure. (The creature never has less than a 5% chance to escape.)

***Geas***: Like the *quest* spell, the *geas* normally involves a small, cumulative punishment for each day the target does not pursue it—the target gets sick and eventually dies. In Ravenloft, the caster can determine the exact punishment. See *quest*, above, for an example.

***Lorloveim's shadowy transformation***: This is a dangerous spell to cast in the Demiplane of Dread. To willingly dabble in the realm of shadow is risky, for the wizard never knows when the shadow might take on a life of its own.

When the spell expires, the creature that has been transformed into a shadow must roll a saving throw vs. spell. If the creature fails, it becomes a shadow fiend (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 [2122]). If the creature was unwillingly transformed into a shadow, it gets a + 4 bonus to the saving throw. The shadow fiend attempts to flee the scene, but then follows the mage for months if necessary, awaiting the ideal moment to attack.

Casting this spell is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

***Monster summoning IV***: Same as *monster summoning I*, above.

***Reincarnation***: Same as the 7th-level priest spell of the same name. Casting this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***True seeing***: Identical to the 5th-level priest spell of the same name.

## 7th-level Spells

***Banishment*:** The dark powers do not permit easy egress from their demiplane. Creatures targeted by this spell make their saving throw with a +4 bonus. If they fai, they are only teleported randomly elsewhere in Ravenloft.

***Bloodstone's frightful joining*:** While most necromantic spells work better in Ravenloft, this one is an exception. The will of the undead is greater here than on most planes, providing them with greater resistance to this spell. Self-willed undead creatures get a +2 bonus to the saving throw. The necromancer must be in the same domain as the undead monster that he or she is attempting to join.

It would probably be better for the necromancer to *not* succeed with this spell. Joining oneself with an undead monster is cause for a Ravenloft powers check. When the spell expires or is canceled, the wizard must roll a saving throw vs. spell to return to his or her body. If it fails, the caster's personality is lost forever and the undead monster's personality returns to its body. The body of the necromancer is now truly undead.

Once the caster's mind is in the undead body, the monster's mind continuously assaults the wizard's mind with ghastly thoughts. At the beginning of each hour during the joining, the necromancer must roll a madness check. Failure means that the undead monster's mind has overcome that of the wizard. The wizard's mind returns to his or her body. Once there, a system shock roll is requires, as stated in the spell description. If the wizard is still alive, he or she is an insane slave under the complete control of the undead creature.

***Control undead*:** In Ravenloft, all undead can make a saving throw to resist control—even those with 3 Hit Dice or less. Those with more than 3 Hit Dice add a +2 bonus to their roll. The lord of any domain is immune to this spell.

Casting this spell requires a powers check.

***Finger of death*:** A small change occurs when this spell is cast in Ravenloft. After three days the body automatically animates as a ju-ju zombie. If the caster is present when this happens, each zombie makes a saving throw vs. spell. Failure means the creature falls under the caster's control. Success means that it despises the caster and seeks to destroy him or her. If the caster is not present when a ju-ju zombie becomes animated, the creature automatically escapes control, seeking out and attempting to kill the caster.

Use of this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Limited wish*:** See *wish*, below.

***Monster summoning V*:** Same as *monster summoning I*, above.

***Shadowcat*:** Upon casting this spell, the wizard must roll a saving throw vs. spell. If he or she fails the check, the cat becomes a slow shadow (see the GREYHAWK® appendix entry of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM). The slow shadow tries to kill the wizard who summoned it. (Generally this means fleeing initially so that it can attack when the wizard least expects it.)

***Shadow walk*:** No one can escape Ravenloft by casting a simple spell like this. However, since the Demiplane of Shadow appears to be strongly linked to the Demiplane of Dread, this spell still enables the caster to walk from place to place as described in the *Player's Handbook*. But the caster seems to be tethered to Ravenloft and is thus unable to fully enter the plane of Shadow. The caster is held in the icy clutches of Ravenloft's dark powers, which let him or her stray no more than arm's length from the land.

***Teleport without error*:** This spell works normally, except it cannot transport the character out of Ravenloft or out of a domain whose borders have been closed. Keep in mind that some areas of Ravenloft change, so the teleporter might not be as familiar with the place as he or she believes.

## 8th-level Spells

***Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting*:** Any humanoid creature killed by this spell must roll a saving throw vs. death magic. If the roll fails, the creature becomes a mummy. The mummy does not necessarily attack immediately, but will wait for a proper time and place. (It has years in which to plan its revenge upon the mage.)

If the wizard uses this spell against a humanoid, he or she must roll a Ravenloft powers check.

***Hornung's random dispatcher*:** Ravenloft is all but closed to interplanar spells, so this spell simply won't work.

***Monster summoning VI*:** Same as *monster summoning I*, above.

## 9th-level Spells

***Astral spell*:** Ravenloft is sequestered from the Astral Plane, so this spell does nothing in the demiplane.

***Energy drain*:** The caster of this spell must make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Estate transference*:** Since Ravenloft is not in the Prime Material Plane, this spell doesn't work. Additionally, the Demiplane of Dread is closed to interplanar travel via spells.

***Gate*:** This spell works normally, with one restriction. The summoned creature is not automatically allowed to return to its place of origin. It must find it own exit from the demiplane, just like any other being. This is frequently enough to provoke the creature to

hunt the caster and his or her friends. Beings summoned by a *gate* spell do not appreciate being stuck in Ravenloft.

The caster of this spell must make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Monster summoning VII***: Same as *monster summoning I*, above.

***Succor***: This spell cannot transport anyone or anything out of Ravenloft or out of a domain whose borders have been closed. Its reversed application is subject to the same rules.

***Wail of the banshee***: Like other necromantic spells, this one actually works better in Ravenloft. Normally it has a range of 30 feet, but in the Demiplane of Dread it has a range of 60 feet. Any female humanoid—not necessarily an elf—who is killed by this spell becomes a banshee. These created banshees owe no loyalty to the mage who created them. In fact, they may try to wreak vengeance upon him or her.

Using this spell requires the caster to roll a Ravenloft powers check.

***Wish***: The dark powers may grant the wish, but they always try to pervert the caster's intent, so this spell rarely performs as desired when cast in Ravenloft. When evil characters wish for something dark and twisted, there is a 50% chance the wish will occur as asked (in which case the wish is already perverted). A *wish* that results in escaping Ravenloft should not work.

## New Spells

The magical arts are always changing, adapting to new circumstances and needs. Wizards, rarely content with what they already know, push the boundaries of arcane knowledge year after year. And priests petition the powers for new ways to aid their causes.

First among wizards in the land of the Mists is Lord Strahd von Zarovich, a 16th-level necromancer who is well schooled in the mystic arts. In this section, the reader will learn a fragment of what Strahd has accumulated, including some priestly magic. (Although he is incapable of wielding such magic himself, he has learned all that he can to protect himself from some of his most dangerous adversaries.)

## Priest Spells

***Aura of Discomfort*** **(Evocation)**
**Reversible**
Sphere: Travelers
Level: 2
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell is the reverse of *aura of comfort*. It is used by evil priests as a form of mild curse. The victim is subjected to an uncomfortable environment for the duration of the spell. The caster can pick the temperature in any range from –20 to 140° F. He or she can also select a weather effect, such as rain, sleet, or snow, for the target to suffer. The effect is not visible to anyone, including the target. However, he or she feels the effects and suffers the results.

The target is only slightly hampered by the spell. He or she can move and fight normally, but suffers a penalty of 1 to all actions that require a die roll for success. This includes attacks, saving throws, and ability checks. The character may find that he or she has to dress according to perceived conditions, rather than to match the actual conditions. For example, a character wearing just a loincloth in the jungle could actually suffer frostbite as a result of this spell.

*Zone of Deception* **(Enchantment/Charm) Reversible**
Sphere: Wards
Level: 2
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 5-foot square/level
Saving Throw: Negates

This is the reverse of the *zone of truth* spell. Like the original version, the *zone of deception* allows a saving throw to avoid its effects. Everyone affected within the area of effect knows immediately that they may speak only lies. What they say and how they say it is up to them, but every statement must be a lie. Questions are not statements, and therefore are not affected. The same is true of suppositions and exclamations. The Dungeon Master should carefully examine every statement to see if it is true, false, or an exception to the spell. For example, the statement "I can only lie" is a true statement under the influence of this spell and therefore cannot be spoken.

*Corpse Whisper* **(Necromancy)**
Sphere: Necromantic
Level: 3
Range: 60 feet
Components: S, M
Duration: Special, up to 1 day
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 undead creature
Saving Throw: None

This spell enables the caster to transmit a message to an undead creature. The message forms silently in the mind of the corpse, in the natural voice of the caster. The caster does not need to be within line of sight of the undead creature, if it is one he or she currently controls. The caster is not privy to the mind or thoughts of the undead creature.

The undead recipient is forced to obey only if it is not self-willed (e.g., zombies and skeletons) and not under the current control of the caster. Self-willed undead can do as they please, but fear of their master may be enough to spur them into immediate obedience.

The spell establishes a link with the undead creature that enables up to half as many one-round, one-sentence messages to be sent as the caster has levels, rounded down. For example, a 9th-level caster could send four messages to an undead creature that received this spell, each message requiring a single round to send and consisting of a single sentence. Even if no commands are sent, the spell wears off in 24 hours.

Although the creature must be within 60 feet of the necromancer when the spell is cast, after that the creature can travel up to a mile away and still receive commands. As one might expect, the spell will not function if the caster and undead minion are in different domains and the borders of either (or any intervening domain) are closed.

The material component of this spell is the tongue of a dead man. Casting this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

*Eyes of the Undead* **(Necromancy)**
Sphere: Necromantic
Level: 3
Range: 40 feet
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 hours/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 undead creature
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell can be cast upon any dead or undead body, size S or larger. Once cast, a link is forged between the necromancer and the cadaver. He or she can see and hear anything that the corpse can "see" or "hear." (Since a dead body is not able to direct its eyes, it is unlikely that it will see much of interest. However, there is no such problem with

hearing.) Undead creatures can direct their vision and even move around, providing a much better target for the spell.

The caster is not able to control the undead creature through this spell, but must rely upon the creature's orders or instincts to provide the appropriate views. The more self-willed and intelligent the undead, the better the chance of seeing or hearing something useful. If the undead creature is a willing servant of the necromancer, no saving throw is necessary.

Although the corpse must be within 40 feet when the spell is cast, the caster can be up to 1 mile away and still see and hear through the creature. The spell ceases to work if the caster and target are in different domains and the borders of either (or any intervening domain) are closed.

The material components for this spell are an eye and ear of a dead man. Casting this spell is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

***Feign Undead* (Necromancy)**
Sphere: Necromantic
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: Person touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster or any willing character to masquerade as a zombie. The target looks undead, ceases to breathe, and feels no pain or emotion. He or she becomes immune to paralysis, poison, or draining attacks. If poison is delivered while under the effects of this spell, the character must make a saving throw when the spell expires. Immunity to pain does not protect the character from harm; he or she still suffers damage normally.

The target's body looks just like an animated corpse—the skin color changes and flesh shrinks to show bones—but attire does not change. The character must attend to the state of his or her clothes if necessary. Note also that joints become stiff and movements jerky. The character cannot attack others as a normal player character, but *can* do so as a normal zombie (see the *Monstrous Manual*).

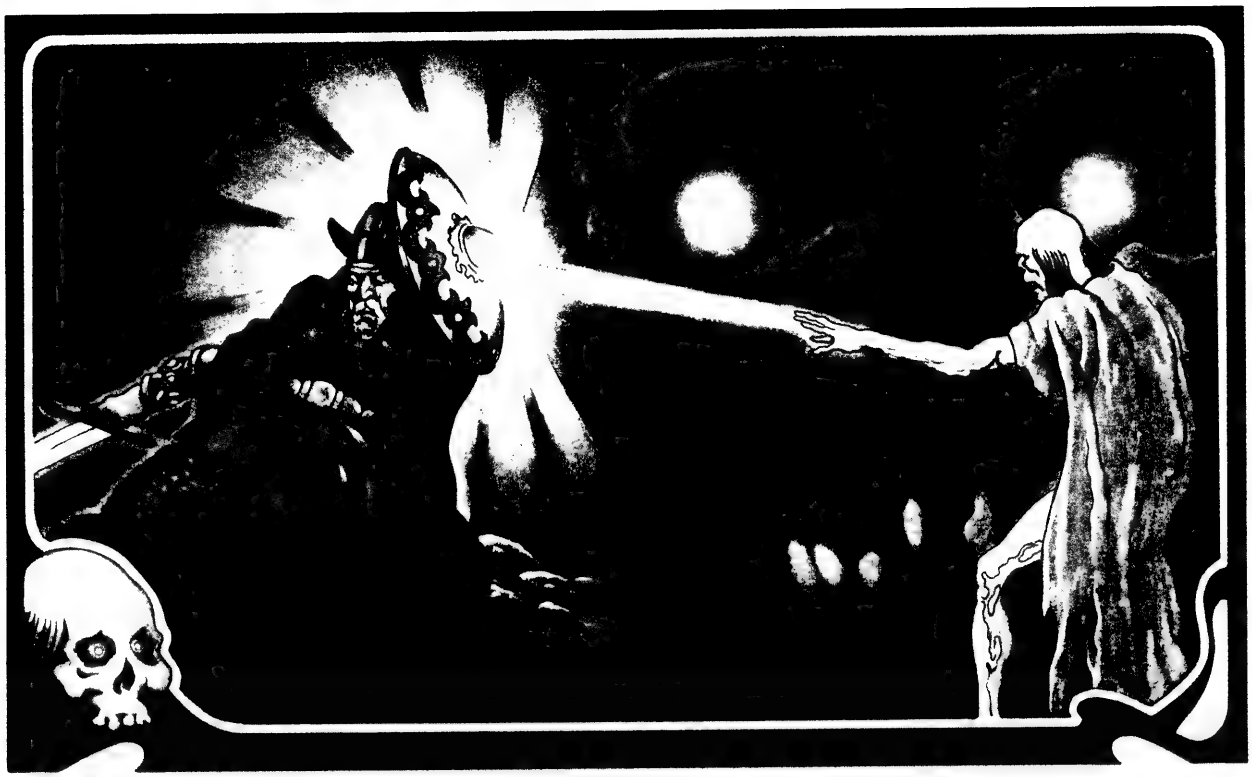
Any creature who sees the fake zombie assumes that it is real. Unless ordered to do so, real undead creatures won't attack the subject. If the person does something out of character, though, then anybody who sees him or her can probably deduce that things are not as they seem.

The material component for this spell is a bit of bone and dirt from a grave. Casting this spell requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Cloud of Putrefication* (Evocation) Reversible**
Sphere: Elemental Air, Water
Level: 5
Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 20-foot cube
Saving Throw: None

This spell is the reverse of *cloud of purification*. It creates a billowy cloud of vile vapors that moves with the prevailing wind at a rate of 20 feet per round. A strong wind breaks it up in four rounds, and a greater wind (a *gust of wind* spell, for example) disperses it in one round. Thick vegetation also makes the cloud dissipate.

The cloud transmutes pure water into organic filth and rotting garbage. Small animals (mice, squirrels, etc.) are polymorphed into rats and rot grubs. Flies and other foul insects immediately rise up from the mess. If it is cast over a sewer or garbage heap, it doubles the size of the filth. The cloud lasts for only one round per level, but the effects of the spell are permanent. This spell is perfect for spoiling a castle's water supply or fouling a small river or spring.



*Living Ward* **(Abjuration, Necromancy) Reversible**
Sphere: Wards
Level: 5
Range: Special
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 2 turns
Area of Effect: 5-foot cube/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell is the reverse of the *undead ward* spell. It prevents any intelligent, living humanoid from entering the area of effect. Animals and nonhumanoids aren't even aware of the ward. The caster can protect a cube whose sides are 5 feet long per level of the caster. For example, a 15th-level caster can create a cube that is 75 feet on a side.

Any living, humanoid creature attempting to enter the area of the spell is "turned" as if he or she were an undead monster. Use Table 1: Turning Undead (see page 27 or the DM screen). The character's level (or the humanoid's Hit Dice) is used to find the appropriate row. In Ravenloft, the level of turning is equal to the caster's level.

In any given round, the spell can affect only 2d6 creatures, who are never destroyed, even if the die roll produces that result—they are merely forced out of the warded area. Only one attempt can be made to enter the ward. Living creatures within the area of effect when the spell is cast are unaffected. But should they ever leave, they might not get back in.

This spell can be cast by a normal, living priest, since living creatures within the ward at the time of casting are unaffected. However, it is particularly effective when used by undead creatures. Strahd von Zarovich has a high-level priest-minion who is able to cast this spell for him, should he ever need it. The same is true for Azalin. Being undead, both of these darklords are immune to the spell effects.

***Divine Curse*** **(Abjuration)**
Sphere: All
Level: 6
Range: Special
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a terrible and lasting curse, so it can only be cast upon someone who has performed a great wickedness—at least in the eyes of the caster. The awful deed may even have been unintentional, but it must have yielded horrible results for the caster or those who are close to him or her. The victim of the curse can be of any alignment, although an evil alignment is most likely.

The priest is given the solemn responsibility of choosing the punishment. Wording is very important, and the player of the priest must record the exact phrasing for future reference. The curse is also subject to unexplained failure (Dungeon Master's discretion) if the punishment is inappropriate, too harsh, or otherwise lacking. In this case, the Dungeon Master may choose to guide the player to a curse that is acceptable or make the player "sweat it out" to see if the curse takes effect.

The priest becomes a vessel for the divine wrath he or she invokes. The caster must be in the presence of the evildoer and must announce the curse clearly to him or her. Thereafter, the curse is in effect. *Divine curse* is a long-term spell, and its effects are seldom immediate. Instead, a curse may develop over months or years.

Although *divine curse* has long-lasting effects, it is not always permanent. The victim has two means of removing the curse: An *atonement* spell can lift the curse, provided the spell supplements a great, heroic deed. Such an action must be an appropriate counter to the original evil deed. Or, the curse itself may include an escape clause. Somewhere in the wording of a curse, there should always be a clue to lifting it, and the Dungeon Master should encourage such clauses. They needn't provide an easy escape, as illustrated by this sample curse: "You have walked upon the downtrodden. Now, each step you take shall be a painful blow to your flesh, until you walk barefoot to the summit of Mount Arabek between sunrise and sunset."

At first the escape clause seems "deadly," if not impossible, to fulfill. But a creative Dungeon Master or player should be able to circumvent the obvious. For instance, the cursed character might pay someone to retrieve a slab of stone from the mountain's summit. Then he or she has only to walk a few feet to it. The Dungeon Master decides which avenues constitute an escape.

The material components for this spell are a tiny silver gong and the priest's holy symbol.

***Ancient Curse*** **(Abjuration)**
Sphere: All
Level: 7
Range: Special
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell works like the 6th-level *divine curse* spell. However, the curse can affect the descendants of the targeted character, too. Here's an example of an ancient curse: "You and your seed shall wither at the touch of gold and silver unto the seventh generation." If the cause is great, the curse may be worded to last indefinitely throughout the victim's family tree.

If he or she provides an escape clause, the caster is often granted more powerful curses. (The Dungeon Master should encourage players to incorporate these clauses into any curse.) In the example above, the curse might continue, "Give back tenfold what was taken, and your children shall be saved."

*Tomb Ward* **(Abjuration)**
Sphere: Wards
Level: 7
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 day
Area of Effect: 1 tomb, a cube 30 feet/side
Saving Throw: None

This spell enables the priest to cast a conditional curse upon a tomb. This is the ultimate form of protection for a burial place. Anyone violating the tomb becomes subject to the curse. At one point during the casting of this spell, the priest must cast a *divine curse* spell, which actually defines the curse.

It takes a full day to cast this spell, and the priest cannot be interrupted at any time during the casting. He or she must walk through all the passages and rooms of the tomb, marking walls, floors, ceilings, doors, etc. with signs of the curse. During this time, the priest sets down the exact conditions that will trigger the divine curse. They can be as simple as "any creature entering this tomb" or as complicated as "any mortal disturbing the remains of the king, removing his burial treasure, breaking or destroying his possessions, or defacing the tomb."

Interpreting the curse is up to the Dungeon Master. In general, the wording of the curse should be interpreted literally. Vague and unclear passages should be given an unfavorable interpretation.

The priest has a limit to the size of tomb he or she can ward. It must fill an area no larger than a cube 30 feet on a side. If the caster is assisted by other priests, however, each additional priest adds 10 feet to each side of the cube. Furthermore, the level of these supporting priests is irrelevant. Therefore, seven priests of various levels (including the caster) can ward a tomb that is no larger than a cube 90 feet on a side.

The material components of this spell are the holy symbol of each priest involved. The symbols must be left in the tomb, frequently buried in the walls or floor. Optionally, a creature of the same race as the priest can be sacrificed instead of a holy symbol. Obviously, only evil priests would do this, and such an act requires a Ravenloft powers check.

## Wizard Spells

*Strahd's Baneful Attractor* **(Evocation) Reversible**
Level: 2
Range: 60
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 creature, 15-foot radius
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is the reverse of *Hornung's baneful deflector.* Of course, the vampire Count chose to name it after himself rather than credit the "upstart" Hornung. The spell forms a hemispherical shell identical in form to the shell of *Hornung's baneful deflector.* Instead of deflecting spells directed at the target, however, it attracts them. All spells targeted at an individual within 15 feet of the victim are redirected toward him or her. Area-effect spells are not affected. If the redirection causes the spell to exceed its range, then it travels the full distance allowed and fizzles out at the edge of its range.

The material component is a few bits of broken glass.

*Augment Undead* **(Necromancy) Reversible**
Level: 3
Range: 40
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: 1 undead creature
Saving Throw: None

This spell augments an undead creature's saving throws and ability to resist being turned. It can only be cast upon an undead creature with at least 3 fewer Hit Dice than the caster has levels. The undead monster is then considered to be 3 Hit Dice stronger than normal for the purposes of saving throws and resisting being turned. Casting *augment undead* requires a Ravenloft powers check.

The reverse of this spell, *diminish undead*, does require the undead creature to make a saving throw, but it can be cast upon *any* undead, even if its level or Hit Dice exceeds the caster's level. If the saving throw fails, the undead creature is turned as if it were 3 Hit Dice lower than its true value. Neither of these spells is cumulative with multiple castings.

The material component is a piece of clothing from any undead creature, which can be reused indefinitely.

***Ground Fog* (Invocation)**
Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 10 rounds
Area of Effect: 1 50-foot × 50-foot square/level
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a ground fog or mist that rises only knee high on a normal human (about 2 feet). The mist fills an area defined by the spellcaster, laid out as 50-foot by 50-foot tiles. The first tile must be centered on the caster, but the others can be laid out in any pattern as long as every tile shares a complete border with another tile. The fog fills only the level or floor where the caster stands. It cascades downward, but evaporates after a few feet.

The fog swirls, so an invisible character moving through the fog does not create enough of a stir to reveal his or her presence. The ground is generally not visible beneath the fog, so it is quite possible for a corpse to be lying on the floor, completely covered by the fog.

This spell may seem innocuous, but to a vampire like Strahd von Zarovich it is a deviously simple trap—the gaseous form of the vampire is indistinguishable from the fog. In effect, he can rise out of the fog to attack with surprise, or he can materialize under the fog cover and strike at passing legs. His undead minions can easily do the same.

The material component of the spell is a pinch of lamb's fleece. A *detect magic* spell will reveal an aura of invocation.

***Corpse Whisper* (Necromancy)**
Level: 4
Range: 40
Components: S, M
Duration: Special, up to 1 day
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1 undead creature
Saving Throw: None

This spell is identical to the priest spell of the same name. The only differences are the level and range, as noted above.

***Eyes of the Undead* (Necromancy)**
Level: 4
Range: 30
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1 undead creature
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is the same as the priest spell of the same name. The only differences are the level, range, and duration, as noted above.

***Mimic Mortal* (Necromancy)**
Level: 4
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 10 rounds + 4/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 lycanthrope
Saving Throw: Negates

This is a very powerful spell in the hands of a vampire wizard. The caster can cause the vampire to lose some of its vulnerabilities in exchange for some of its powers. In effect, the undead creature simulates a mortal for a short time.

The caster chooses how many vulnerabilities and powers to cancel out, but not which ones. He or she can choose a maximum of one vulnerability per two levels of experience. The vulnerabilities and powers are taken from the list below, in order. If a particular type of undead creature does not have the listed vulnerability or power, skip to the next entry. In all cases, one vulnerability is sacrificed for one power. The least valuable vulnerabilities are sacrificed first, but the most valuable powers go with them. In general, a vampire desiring to masquerade as human will attempt to exchange as many vulnerabilities and powers as possible.

**✣ Mimic Mortal Subtable ✣**

| Vulnerability | Power |
|---|---|
| Deathly pallor * | Life drain |
| Garlic | Magical weapon needed to hit |
| Mirrors | Charm gaze |
| Invitation ** | Gaseous form |
| Held at bay † | Shapechange |
| Running water | Immunity to *sleep*, *hold*, poison, and paralysis |
| Holy water | Summon animals |
| Sunlight | Supernatural strength †† |
| Being turned ‡ | Spider climb |

* Normal skin color, warm to the touch
** Entering a home without an invitation
† With holy symbol
†† Strength score becomes 15
‡ Also immune to damage from holy symbol

***Neverending Nightmare* (Enchantment)**
Level: 4
Range: 10 feet/level
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell enables the caster to subject the victim to nightmarish dreams. It can be cast upon the person at any time, but it remains dormant until the person sleeps. The saving throw is rolled secretly when the spell is cast. When he or she sleeps, the victim has a horrible nightmare. The exact nature of the nightmare differs from person to person, depending on the unique fears of the individual.

The victim of the nightmare awakens in a cold sweat, gasping for air and clawing at his or her face. After a few rounds the dreamer regains composure. The nightmare isn't recalled in any detail, only vague, unspeakable horrors. The nightmares continue every night until the spell is broken—a simple *remove curse* spell will do the trick. Under the scrutiny of a *detect magic* spell, the target radiates an aura of enchantment.

After the first nightmare, the character automatically fails any future fear or horror checks. In each case, the "memory" of the nightmare comes flooding back. The victim is convinced that the nightmare predicted this scene and will result in horrible doom.

The material component of this spell is a lock of hair from a black horse. Casting this spell is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

***Rain of Terror* (Evocation)**
Level: 4
Range: 1 mile
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 hour + 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: 1-mile diameter
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes a rainstorm to develop over the next turn. If storm clouds are already overhead, the rain begins immediately. It lasts for one hour, plus one turn per level of the caster, and it covers a circle 1 mile in diameter.

The caster can choose different forms of rain, within the limits established below. Living creatures that rain down have a 50% chance to survive. Therefore, after a rain of toads, half of them are alive and hopping around, and the other half are dead, killed by the impact. None of the animals are able to harm anyone.

| Wizard's Level | Type of Rain |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | Black, putrid water |
| 3–4 | Ash |
| 5–6 | Steaming blood |
| 7–8 | Toads |
| 9–10 | Dead bats |
| 11–12 | Snakes |
| 13+ | Spiders |

***Suppress Lycanthropy* (Alteration) Reversible**
Level: 4
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: 1 lycanthrope
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is both a blessing and a bane to all lycanthropes. If successful, the spell forces the lycanthrope into its human form. The creature retains any powers or immunities that human form normally grants, but remains unable to change shape for the duration of the spell.

This spell can be used to give the afflicted lycanthrope a temporary reprieve from its curse or it can be used as a combat tactic against any type of the monster. Most shapechangers are helpless in humanoid form. Thus, the spell is both a benefit and a blight.

The material component of this spell is a sprig of wolfsbane.

Strahd von Zarovich was as interested in the reverse of this spell, *induce lycanthropy*, as its original form. With it he can force a lycanthrope into its animal or man-beast form. Afflicted lycanthropes adopt the bestial mindset that normally overcomes them in this form.

Casting *induce lycanthropy* is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

***Feign Undead*** **(Necromancy)**
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: Person touched
Saving Throw: None

This spell is identical to the priest spell of the same name, except for its level.

***Soul Anchor*** **(Enchantment/Charm)**
Level: 5
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Creature touched
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell ties a victim's life force to a particular edifice—a building, an estate, a castle, etc. This prevents the victim from leaving that place unless released from the spell—a simple *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spell will do the trick, but the spell also is negated if the owner of the building or estate grants permission to leave. (The owner can be *charmed* or otherwise forced into granting permission.)

The specified place of the anchor must have clearly defined borders, such as the walls of a castle. A grove of trees does not have a clearly definable border and hence is an unsuitable place for a soul anchor.

***Strahd's Malefic Meld*** **(Necromancy)**
Level: 5
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Creatures melded
Saving Throw: None

This spell enables the necromancer to create an undead monster that is a composite of up to three dead bodies. These parts can be from any selection of dead animals, humanoids, or monsters. The only restriction is that the creatures can span no more than two size categories. For example, a dog and an elf could be melded since one is size S and the other size M. However, a house cat and an elf could not be melded since the cat is size T, which is more than one size category different from the elf. Similarly, a dog, an elf, and an ogre could not be melded since they are sizes S, M, and L, respectively. None of the creatures melded together can have more than 5 Hit Dice.

The advantage of the meld is that the undead monster can take various attributes from whichever of the original creatures used them best. The attribute must be associated with a particular piece of the creature's body, and that part ends up in the meld. At least one attribute must be taken from each creature in the meld. The monster always has animal Intelligence, regardless of that attribute's score in component creatures. It is utterly loyal to its creator.

There are four attributes that are chosen through body parts: Hit Dice, Armor Class, movement, and attacks. The monster's Hit Dice determine its THAC0, saving throws, and "turning undead" value. The movement rates can be drawn from multiple creatures as long as only one movement rate per creature per medium is selected (running, swimming, flying, burrowing, etc.).

The number of attacks per round must be

chosen from a single creature, but it can have attack forms from any or all of the creatures in the meld. It is quite possible for the creature to have more attack forms than it has attacks per round. Of course, the appropriate body part for the attack must exist in the meld. Most physical attacks can be retained, including poison, paralysis, web spinning, and breath weapons.

Magical or mental powers do not survive the transition into undeath. This includes gaze attacks, spellcasting, magic resistance, immunity to nonmagical weapons, spell-like abilities, a lycanthrope's cursed bite, etc. However, for each creature in the meld that has a magical or mental power, the undead creation gets one special undead power. These powers are cumulative and granted in order. The first is that a +1 weapon is needed to hit, then energy drain by touch is acquired, and then 10% magic resistance. The level drain must be associated with a single form of attack, such as the claws on a claw/claw/bite sequence. Note that only a meld of three creatures that *all* had magical or mental powers creates a monster with magic resistance. Among player character classes, only spellcasters and psionicists qualify as having special powers for this purpose. Other classes that can cast spells at higher levels, such as the ranger and bard, do not qualify.

One of Strahd's favorite melds is a werewolf, a large spider, and a gargoyle. This foul creature uses the gargoyle's flying movement and the spider's ground movement. Even though a werewolf is faster than the spider, he can only pick the legs of one of them and therefore cannot have web movement if he uses the lycanthrope's legs. The Hit Dice are drawn from the werewolf, which has 4 + 3 Hit Dice. The Armor Class of 5 is taken from the gargoyle, as is the number of attacks (4). The creature gets the werewolf's bite and the spider's poison and web-spinning ability. Because both the gargoyle and the werewolf had magical abilities, the melded creature gets the first two undead abilities of a +1 weapon needed to hit and a level-draining horn (Strahd's choice). Visually, the abomination has a spider's legs, a werewolf's body and head, and a gargoyle's wings and arms. In the summary below, its attacks are claw/claw/bite/horn.

**Werewolf/Spider/Gargoyle Meld:** THAC0 15; #AT 4; Dmg 1d3/1d3/2d4/1d4; AC 5; HD 4+3; MV 6, Fl 15(C); SA poison bite, webs, level drain; SD +1 weapon to hit; MR nil; SZ M; Int low; AL CE; ML special; XP 3,000.

The physical component for this spell is a pinch of powdered doppleganger bone. Casting this spell is cause for a powers check.

***Misty Summons*** **(Alteration/Invocation)**
Level: 7
Range: 1 mile/level
Components: V, S
Duration: 10 rounds/level
Casting Time: 7 rounds
Area of Effect: 30-foot radius
Saving Throw: None

This spell requires a special portal to be built prior to the casting—a doorway or archway of stone. It must be at least 3 feet, and no more than 30 feet, wide. The materials to build it cost 3,000 gold pieces, the labor takes six months, and all of it must be performed by the caster. Once built, it looks like any normal arch.

When casting the spell, the wizard visualizes a well-known place. It must be within the range of the spell and in the same domain as the caster. The caster must be within 30 feet of the portal. Over the next seven rounds, a misty fog coalesces at that distant place and within the portal. Once the fog has been created, the caster no longer needs to concentrate on it. He or she can dispel it at any time, but cannot change its position. The fog is magical, with an aura of alteration and invocation, but is otherwise indistinguishable from normal fog.

Any creature stepping into the mists walks out of them through the portal, though anyone seeing the mists forming may, of course, choose to not step into them. If the mists are created over characters, they have seven rounds to escape. If the characters are sleeping or otherwise immobile, they are transported through the misty portal.

Count von Zarovich has built a misty portal somewhere in his castle, but its location is unknown. Those whom he summons to his castle rarely return. . . .

***Strahd's Frightful Joining*** **(Necromancy) Reversible**
Level: 7
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: Negates and special

This spell is the reverse of *Bloodstone's frightful joining*. The original spell enables the caster to merge his mind with the body of an undead monster. This spell enables an unliving creature, such as a vampire or lich, to merge its mind with the body of a living person. Since Strahd von Zarovich is a vampire, this variation is much more useful to him than Bloodstone's original spell. The target of the spell must be a living, intelligent humanoid. If the target is not a human or demihuman, it enjoys a +2 bonus to its saving throw—goblins, ogres, and werewolves are good examples of humanoids that get this bonus. If the saving throw succeeds, the undead mage is forced back into its original body. No system shock roll is necessary.

If the target's saving throw fails, the undead wizard joins its mind with the target's body. While in the creature's body, the caster can use all of its special abilities except memorized spells. Meanwhile, the wizard's undead body

remains lifeless and vulnerable to attack. Once in the target's body, the wizard can travel any distance as long as it remains in the same domain as its true body.

Once in the body, the undead monster's mind is open to the target's mind, filling it with ghastly thoughts. At the beginning of each hour during the joining, the mortal target must make a madness check (see Chapter III). Failure means that the undead mage's mind has overcome that of its victim. No further checks are necessary and the undead wizard can remain in control of its mortal victim effortlessly for the duration of the spell. A successful madness check means that the undead mage must roll a saving throw vs. death magic to remain in control of the body. If it succeeds, the mental battle goes on. If it fails, the undead creature's mind is cast from the body and the victim regains control. However, even if the target successfully ejects the undead mage from his body, he or she must roll a horror check. While still sane, the horror of the memory is quite vivid.

One interesting side effect of *Strahd's frightful joining* is that while in the mortal body, the caster can do things that it cannot do in its own body. For example, a vampiric caster can walk in the sunlight, see a reflection in a mirror, etc. For Strahd, this spell can have very potent ramifications. Of course, his victim is likely to be a raving lunatic when the darklord is through with him (see the rules for madness in Chapter III), but Strahd cares little about that.

***Allisandro's Binding Curse***
**(Alteration, Necromancy)**
Level: 9
Range: Special
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 3 hours
Area of Effect: 1 creature
Saving Throw: None

This loathsome spell was created by the Vistana Allisandro Tselikov several hundred years ago. When his tribe learned he had been delving into the dark secrets of necromancy and attempting to harness dark magic, they cast him out. He wandered, alone and broken, eventually becoming the first of Ravenloft's darklings (see the RAVENLOFT appendix of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM). In isolation, he returned to the research he had been forced to abandon. Eventually, he crafted this spell to exact revenge upon the Vistani for the wrong he felt they had done to him.

In many ways, this spell is an improved version of the *permanency* spell, which is designed to be used in the laying of curses. It permits the caster to lay a normally temporary spell upon an individual, but make it permanent. In order to cast this spell, the wizard must have some portion of the target's body. This can range from a lock of hair or nail clippings to a severed finger or limb. The spell is long and involved, requiring three hours to cast, involving a great deal of ritual and ceremony. The wizard must have at least two assistants to aid him or her in the weaving of this dark magic. Neither of them can be under any form of compulsion (such as a threat or magical charm), and both must be fully aware of the act in which they are involved. The assistants need not be spellcasters, however.

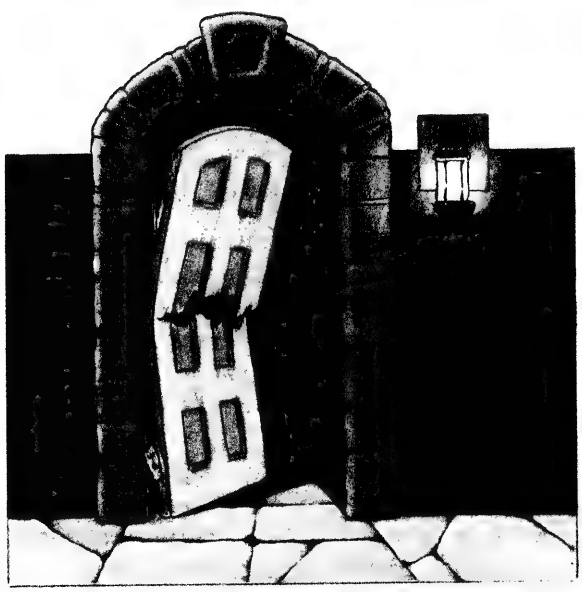
At the end of the casting period, the material component is thrown into a brazier of hot coals, where it is consumed in a flash of sickly light and a boiling cloud of vile-smelling vapor. At that instant, the caster devotes a portion of his or her own life force to the spell and is permanently drained of 1 point of Constitution.

There is no linear limit to the range of this curse, but it cannot affect someone outside the domain in which it is cast. If used outside Ravenloft, the victim can be anywhere in the same plane.

The spells with which it can be used in conjunction are *anti-magic shell*, *babble*, *bestow curse*, *claws of the umber hulk*, *confuse languages*, *contagion*, *emotion*, *enervation*, *enlarge*, *feign death*, *feign undead*, *fist of stone*, *insatiable thirst*, *irritation*, *levitate*, *lower resistance*, *Malec-Keth's flame fist*, *neverending nightmare*, *Otto's irresistible dance*, *reduce*, *suggestion*, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter*, and *unluck*. The wizard must actually cast the associated spell during the casting of *Allisandro's binding curse*. None of these spells can actually harm the victim because they are a part of him or her. For example, *Otto's irresistible dance* does not produce fatigue, nor does it prevent the character from sleeping (although the victim will certainly present an odd sight dancing in his or her sleep). *Malec-Keth's flame fist* will not burn the character's fist, but could inflict harm if the victim tries to scratch an itch.

Removing this spell is almost impossible. A *limited wish* spell will dispel the effects for one day per level of the caster. Only a full *wish* spell can dispel *Allisandro's binding curse*.

Of course, casting such a vengeful spell is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.



# VII: PSIONICS IN RAVENLOFT

*I am lost on a straight path within my own mind. When I came to this place of smooth evil, I understood the powers of the mind better than most men. Black skies and white water ran across the beast's back. I could use its hidden abilities to touch other red minds and change the way they twisted. Once I touched a far-away mind, filled with a sour, alien evil. . . .*

—Ranting from the Dream Trances of Vlanic Kroskos

The budding psionicist who enters Ravenloft may find that his or her own mind has become the worst of enemies. As with spells and magical items, psionic powers in the land of the Mists are not always what they seem to be. The Demiplane of Dread twists and perverts everything that touches it, so the dark recesses of the mind are filled with danger.

The psionicist is not the only creature in this foul place that can seep into the minds of others. Deep under the mountains of Bluetspur, the illithids' power coils and grows. They have been brewing black treachery for decades in secret. Vlanic Kroskos was once sane—until he contacted an alien mind in that sun-forsaken island domain.

## Errata and Clarifications

The first printing of *The Complete Psionics Handbook* had a few erroneous statements. The second and subsequent printings of that supplement have the correct information. The following paragraphs list errata and clarifications of entries in the first printing.

**Psychokinesis discipline:** The following psychokinetic devotions do not require telekinesis as a prerequisite—animate shadow, control light, control sound, molecular agitation, soften, and telekinesis. All other psychokinetic devotions and sciences have telekinesis as a prerequisite.

**Telepathy discipline:** Telepathic defense modes (intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind blank, thought shield, and tower of iron will) have no prerequisites. All references to prerequisites for these sciences and devotions should be deleted. A character does not need access to the telepathy discipline to learn defense modes.

The mindlink science is not a prerequisite for the following telepathic devotions: empathy, ESP, identity penetrations, incarnation awareness, psychic impersonation, and send thoughts. Mindlink has never been required for ejection, conceal thought, contact, life detection, mind bar, psionic blast, or psychic messenger. Mindlink is a prerequisite for all other telepathic sciences and devotions.

Psychic crush should be a devotion, while psionic blast should be a science.

All references to the "telepathy" power (or prerequisite) should be to the mindlink science instead.

On page 75, the heading for the fate link science is missing.

Ego whip and mind thrust both require contact as a prerequisite.

**Psionic monster listings:** References to the "amplification" power of the brain mole should be changed to psychic drain. Also, mind thrust is a telepathic devotion, not a metapsionic one.

References to the "amplification" power of the intellect devourer should be changed to psychic drain. Also, ectoplasmic form should be listed as a devotion, not a science.

## Psionics and the Undead

Undead are more terrifying in Ravenloft than other worlds, but they should be especially so to the psionicist. The demiplane's connections to the Negative Energy Plane are stronger in Ravenloft than they are in the Prime

Material Plane, and those who peer into the minds of the living dead may be exposed to thoughts too hideous for the mortal mind to grasp.

For the most part, any reference to undead in this chapter means "self-willed" undead, and the reader should consider this the case unless the text specifically states otherwise. Technically, the term refers to those monsters with at least a low Intelligence (5 or higher); when in doubt, the Dungeon Master should check the appropriate entry in the *Monstrous Manual* or other resource. Note that self-willed undead still may be controlled by other creatures, but even the unliving slave of another remains "self-willed" for the purposes of looking into its mind, unless the master has specific instructions as to what the slave should or should not think under these circumstances.

In Ravenloft, undead can put up a shield of false thoughts that are indistinguishable from the real things, even when the psionicist uses ESP or similar powers. However, this is a conscious function, not an automatic one. The undead creature must deliberately decide to project artificial thoughts, which it would not do unless it was aware that someone was examining it. This deception does not require an action or otherwise hinder the creature. Furthermore, the monster can specify exactly what thoughts and emotions are portrayed. For the most part, the undead tend to project emotions that they understand, such as anger, hatred, jealously, and so forth. More intelligent monsters are capable of projecting positive emotions such as love and friendship, but they find them distasteful.

Undead are immune to most mental-control powers or mind-altering abilities in Ravenloft, including many of the powers in the telepathic discipline. Unfortunately, this does not mean that the walking dead cannot be psionic or even have telepathic powers. A psionic vampire able to use the telepathic discipline is a horrifying opponent indeed!

## Altered Sciences and Devotions

The following table lists psionic powers that are either altered by the dark powers of Ravenloft or that need further clarification for use in the demiplane. Those powers marked with an asterisk (*) require a Ravenloft powers check when they are invoked. If a science or devotion is not listed, then it works normally. Psionic powers sometimes have special effects when a 20 is rolled or if the power score is rolled—any changes to these conditions are noted as well. As is true of most of Ravenloft's insidious effects, psionicists are unaware of these new limitations until the results of using their powers make it painfully obvious.

**✣ Table 13: Altered Psionic Powers ✣**

**Clairsentient Sciences**
Aura sight
Clairaudience
Clairvoyance
Object reading
Precognition
Sensitivity to psychic impressions

**Clairsentient Devotions**
Danger sense
Know location
Radial navigation
Spirit sense

**Psychokinetic Sciences**
(no changes)

**Psychokinetic Devotions**
Animate object
Animate shadow
Control body

**Psychometabolic Sciences**
Animal affinity
Death field*
Energy containment
Life draining*
Metamorphosis
Shadow-form*

**Psychometabolic Devotions**
Absorb disease
Aging*
Cause decay
Cell adjustment
Double pain

**Psychoportive Sciences**
Banishment
Probability travel
Teleport
Teleport other

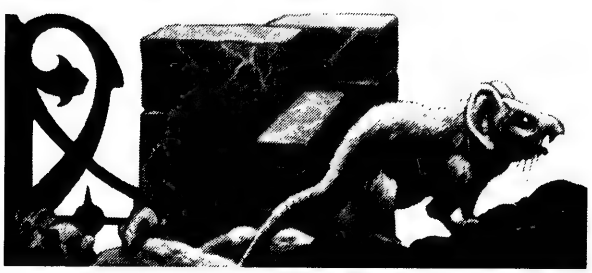
**Psychoportive Devotions**
Astral projection
Dimension walk
Dimensional door
Teleport trigger

**Telepathic Sciences**
Domination
Mass domination
Mindlink
Mindwipe
Probe

**Telepathic Devotions**
Contact
ESP
Identity penetration
Inflict pain
Life detection
Truthear

**Metapsionic Sciences**
Appraise
Aura alteration
Psychic surgery
Ultrablast

**Metapsionic Devotions**
Psychic drain
Retrospection
Wrench



## Clairsentient Sciences

The dark, swirling mists of Ravenloft obscure all creatures' abilities to see the truth. Spellcasters' divination spells are weaker, for example, less able to tell good from evil. Nothing is quite as frightening as the unknown. In Ravenloft evil is always assumed, but never surely known until too late.

These rules hold true for the sciences and devotions of the clairsentient discipline as well. The evil thoughts of supernatural creatures are generally disguised and kept hidden from those who would probe the mind. The Demiplane of Dread grants them the power to put up a false front.

A creature of evil has the option to let contact occur. A single glimpse into the depths of a truly foul mind may cost the trespasser his or her sanity. As the full horror of the creature's evil becomes apparent, the mortal mind may not be able to withstand the shock. Therefore, a peek into an unsuspecting evil mind is cause for a horror check (with modifiers appropriate to the degree of evil), and those who peer into a dark mind aware of their intrusion may be required to roll for madness.

**Aura sight:** This power can never reveal the good or evil portion of a character's alignment. The true evil of a creature or character is hidden in Ravenloft. Like casting the *detect alignment* spell, using this power only reveals the lawfulness or chaotic part of alignment.

**Clairaudience:** A ghostly white, transparent ear appears wherever the psionicist is trying to listen. This ghost ear is visible to anyone at that location, assuming that the subject looks in its direction. It matches the psionicist's ear exactly, including any jewelry that he or she is wearing. Most ears are indistinguishable from one another, but some—like elves' ears—are distinctive. An unsuspecting character might mistake this ear for a supernatural visitation, in which case a horror check (with a +2 bonus) is possible. This power cannot be used to listen across a domain border.

Any attack that uses sound works through the ear. For example, a wolfwere can cause lethargy with a song (see the *Monstrous Manual*). If the monster were to sing while the psionic ear was present, the psionicist would have to roll a successful saving throw or become a victim. The ear is immune to all other physical, magical, and psionic attacks.

*Power score*—No ghostly ear appears.

*20*—The entire head of the psionicist floats like a disembodied apparition—definitely cause for a horror check (no bonus). Its features are distinct enough that the character can be identified at a later time.

**Clairvoyance:** Similar to clairaudience, this power places an eye, ghostly but visible, at the spot where the power is being projected. If it is mistaken for a ghost or other spirit, a horror check might be required. The color of the eye can be seen as a watery hue.

The presence of the eye renders the psionicist vulnerable to gaze attacks. For example, a vampire might be able to charm the psionicist by meeting the gaze of the clairvoyant eye. The eye is immune to all other physical, magical, and psionic attacks.

*Power score*—No visible eye appears.

*20*—The character's entire disembodied head appears. Seeing such a sight is strong cause for a horror check. Its features are clear enough that the character can be identified later by those who saw the apparition.

**Object reading:** The good or evil part of the owner's alignment cannot be read with this power. When revealing the previous owner's race, remember that "undead" is not a race, but merely a condition of the creature. Examining the *Tome of Strahd* with this power would reveal that its owner is human, but the fact that he is also the demiplane's most deadly vampire is not revealed. Similarly, a shroud carried by a groaning spirit (banshee)

would only give off emanations of being owned by an elf.

*Power score*—The psionicist automatically learns all information from the table, excluding the good/evil portion of the owner's alignment.

*20*—The psionicist becomes obsessed with the object and strives to keep it until he or she can attempt to read it again.

**Precognition:** Ravenloft clings to its secrets, sharing them only with the chosen few. No one can pierce the veil of the future in the land of the Mists, with the notable exception of the Vistani. In the case of this psionic power, the most powerful Vistani fortuneteller in the same domain is instantly alerted that someone not of her people is attempting to view the future. Furthermore, she can force a false vision upon the character if the power check is failed. The Vistani fortuneteller does not always exercise this option, but if she does the psionicist cannot distinguish the false vision from a true one.

*Power score*—No vision comes, but the Vistani are not alerted to the use of the power.

*20*—The character sees a scene of his or her own, or a loved one's, grisly death. This is reason for a horror check.

**Sensitivity to psychic impressions:** The function of this science is unchanged in Ravenloft.

*Power score*—The character gains an unusually clear understanding of each event.

*20*—An angry spirit (not necessarily a ghost) comes forward and attacks the psionicist. The type of spirit is dependent upon the object, domain, and the Dungeon Master.

## Clairsentient Devotions

**Danger sense:** This power actually works too well in Ravenloft. The dark powers gleefully allow the character to sense all of the horrifying danger around. The tingling that warns of danger happens when any creature in the same domain is thinking about harming the character, even if he or she doesn't pose an immediate threat. It goes off any time the character is subject to a Ravenloft powers check. It also goes off any time the character crosses a domain border or enters the mists of Ravenloft. In other words, it goes off most of the time.

*Power score*—The psionicist learns how far away the danger is. This can be quite useful since it can at least tell the character that the danger is several miles away.

*20*—The psionicist continuously senses danger, even if nobody is plotting to harm him or her.

**Know location:** This devotion works as described in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, but the character never learns he or she is in a demiplane (rolling the power score is an exception). This devotion cannot reveal any larger scale information than the name of the domain. It operates normally for smaller scale information, however, such as the name of the town, the house, etc.

*Power score*—The psionicist learns that he or she is in the Demiplane of Dread, as well as his or her exact location within.

*20*—The question "Where am I?" appears in the mind of the lord of the domain. The lord has the option to answer it in any way he or she chooses, or to not answer it at all. If the question is answered, the psionicist is unable to distinguish this answer from a normal response to using the devotion.

**Radial navigation:** This devotion works as described, except that the character cannot fix on any point outside of the domain.

**Spirit sense:** The term "spirit" does not include any undead with a physical body, only incorporeal undead. Although revenants are listed in *The Complete Psionics Handbook* as being detectable, in Ravenloft they are not since they have a physical body. This means that such undead as zombies, wights,

vampires, and revenants are not detectable, while ghosts, phantoms, banshees, and the like are so.

Spirits have a much stronger aura in Ravenloft, allowing them to be sensed much farther away. The presence of spirits anywhere within 60 yards alerts the character. However, unless he or she is able to experiment with the power, the psionicist is unaware of the expanded range. If the lord of the domain is a spirit, then a psionicist using this power constantly senses a "nearby" spirit so long as the darklord is in the domain. This reflects the pervasive influence of the lord on the domain.

*Power score*—The psionicist learns how far away the spirit is, but not its direction.

*20*—The spirit becomes aware of the psionicist's attention. Furthermore, the spirit immediately knows the direction to the character, but not how far away he or she is.

## Psychokinetic Sciences

These powers are unaffected by Ravenloft. Manipulating objects with the mind is not directly relevant to the good or evil nature of the psionicist, so the dark powers take little interest in the use of such skills. However, as with anything in Ravenloft, if they are used for selfish, evil purposes, a Ravenloft powers check may be necessary.

## Psychokinetic Devotions

**Animate object:** This devotion is unchanged in Ravenloft.

*Power score*—The animation is smooth and lifelike.

*20*—The animated object takes on a life of its own, remaining animated even after the psionicist ceases to use the devotion. It becomes obsessed with the psionicist and follows him or her everywhere. If rejected by the character, it secretly follows the character and tries to kill him or her. If kept around, it is insanely jealous and does not let any other characters or creatures near the psionicist, even if it must attack to keep them away.

**Animate shadow:** A prudent psionicist must beware of giving life to anything made of darkness when in Ravenloft, as it may haunt him or her forever.

*Power score*—The range increases to 100 yards.

*20*—The animated shadow is imparted with a little of the substance of the demiplane, becomes the monster of the same name, and seeks to kill the character. It follows him or her everywhere, lurking just out of sight, waiting for a chance to pounce upon its former master. As long as the shadow monster lives, the character casts no shadow, and any normal person who notices that will assume the worst about the character.

**Shadow:** THAC0 17; Dmg 1d4+1; AC 7; HD 3+3; MV 12; SA drains Strength; SD +1 weapon needed to hit; MR as undead; SZ M; ML special; XP 650

**Control body:** Taking over another creature's body is not in itself evil, but the potential to abuse the power is great. If the psionicist uses the controlled body for evil or unnecessarily selfish purposes, then a Ravenloft powers check must be rolled. Controlling another creature's body to stop it from attacking or to save it from imminent danger is not considered selfish or evil. Using the power to put a quick and painless end to an evil creature is also safe. However, making it dance on hot coals just for the fun of it is quite evil. The Dungeon Master must make a judgment about how the psionicist is using the controlled creature.

*Power score*—The psionicist automatically wins the initial psychic contest.

*20*—The psionicist suffers partial paralysis in an arm or leg for 1d10 × 10 minutes.

## Psychometabolic Sciences

Some of the darkest of psionic powers lurk in this discipline. To use them in Ravenloft is to risk a horrible fate. The attentions of dark powers are always captured when these abilities are used.

**Animal affinity:** This science is unchanged in Ravenloft. However, there is a side note. Seeing a character grow claws, fur, or some other animal characteristic is likely to lead natives of Ravenloft to the wrong conclusion. They are likely to assume that the character is a lycanthrope or some other form of shapechanging, supernatural creature. Anyone who is unprepared for the psionicist's change may be called upon to roll a horror check (with a +2 bonus). Members of the character's party who have seen the psionicist use this science before are not subject to the horror check.

**Death field:** Sucking the life from a humanoid creature may cause it to return from the grave to haunt the character. This is left to the discretion of the Dungeon Master, but in general there should be a 10% chance of doing so. The mathematical odds are less important than the state of the victim, however. If the victim had great strength of will or left an important task unfinished, then the chance of returning as an undead creature should be much greater.

The type of undead created is usually whichever undead most closely matches the Hit Dice or level of the creature killed. Regardless of the original Hit Dice, however, there is a 20% chance that the dead will walk again as a revenant. The death field creates a direct channel to the Negative Energy Plane, so any undead creature inside such a field actually recovers as many lost hit points as it was supposed to lose.

Using this power requires a Ravenloft powers check.

*Power score*—The psionicist loses only half the number of hit points specified. Victims who fail their saving throws lose the full amount.

*20*—The power fails, but the psionicist loses the hit points anyway.

**Energy containment:** This science is unchanged in Ravenloft. As a clarification, the chill touch and level-draining attacks of some undead are not energy attacks and are not affected by this science. Such attacks expose the victim to the supernatural chill of the grave, not a physical cold.

**Life draining:** This science allows the character to imitate the draining powers inherent in the most powerful forms of undead. How can it be anything but evil? As with the death field power, creatures killed by life draining can become undead and seek revenge. There is a basic 1 in 4 chance of this happening. The type of undead usually matches the Hit Dice of the victim. However, there is a 25% chance that the comes back as a vampire, regardless of Hit Dice.

Touching one of the walking dead reverses the flow of the power, causing an automatic backfire as defined by the power. Half of the psionicist's remaining hit points are absorbed by the creature.

Using this power requires a Ravenloft powers check.

*Power score*—Rate of drain increases to 1d20 points per round.

*20*—Backfire! Half of the psionicist's remaining hit points are absorbed by the target, reversing the power's effects.

**Metamorphosis:** This science is unchanged in Ravenloft. Keep in mind that seeing a character grow claws, fur, or some other animal characteristic is likely to lead natives of Ravenloft to the wrong conclusion. They are going to assume that the character is a lycanthrope or some other form of shapechanging, supernatural creature. Anyone

unprepared for the psionicist's change may be prompted to roll a horror check (with a +2 bonus). Members of the character's party who have seen the psionicist use this science before are not subject to the horror check.

**Shadow-form:** This science is unchanged in Ravenloft, but the world of shadow is tainted by the evil of the demiplane. Using shadow-form requires a Ravenloft powers check.

*Power score*—The psionicist is able to travel in brightly lit areas normally prohibited when using this science.

*20*—The dark side of the psionicist's nature is freed, and he or she becomes a shadow (see the *Monstrous Manual*) under the control of the Dungeon Master for 1d4 × 10 rounds and embarks upon a killing spree. No further PSPs are expended if this happens.

## Psychometabolic Devotions

**Absorb disease:** In Ravenloft this power can absorb lycanthropy from another person. Some forms of lycanthropy found are transmitted diseases of a magical nature. The absorb disease devotion draws this dread affliction into the psionicist's body.

If the target of the devotion is a natural lycanthrope or one that has been cursed by the affliction, this does not remove the disease from that person's system. For those creatures, it is not a disease but a condition. However, they are able to transmit it as a disease to others, so the psionicist can "catch" it with this devotion.

If the target is an infected lycanthrope, then the devotion works normally. However, keep in mind that there is no easy cure for lycanthropy. The disease has merely been transferred from one character to another.

*Power score*—The disease, even lycanthropy, is automatically destroyed by the psionicist's immune system.

*20*—The disease remains in the victim while spreading to the psionicist.

**Aging:** Using this power is akin to life-energy draining. Anyone killed by this power becomes a ghost and seeks revenge upon the murderer. Using this devotion requires a powers check.

*Power score*—The victim ages 1d20 years.

*20*—The psionicist ages 1d10 years.

**Cause decay:** This devotion actually works better in Ravenloft. The demiplane enjoys decay and decadence, and it enhances this devotion so that the saving throw vs. acid has a –2 penalty applied to it.

*Power score*—The save automatically fails. In addition, the character is subject to a Ravenloft powers check.

*20*—One of the psionicist's own items decays (no save possible)—either the first item touched or one chosen by the Dungeon Master.

**Cell adjustment:** This devotion works normally, but it cannot cure lycanthropy in the psionicist.

**Double pain:** This devotion works normally in Ravenloft. However, using it to extract information from a creature is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

## Psychoportive Sciences

None of these powers can transport any creature or object across the borders of a domain. Ravenloft jealously guards the power to leave a domain. As an obvious corollary, these powers cannot expel any creature or object from the demiplane itself.

**Banishment:** The affected creature is banished into a pocket dimension of shadow within the planar boundaries of Ravenloft. It is an area of oppressive darkness that cannot be lit even by magic. Such devotions as see sound work normally, but no form of infravision can penetrate the inky blackness. Since the pocket dimension is inside Ravenloft, all the twisted rules of the demiplane still apply.

*Power score*—The banished figure cannot return of its own accord; it must wait until allowed to return. The psionicist need not pay PSPs to keep it there.

*20*—Both the intended victim and the psionicist are banished to the shadowy pocket dimension. The other figure bounces back when the psionicist stops paying the maintenance cost, but the psionicist must return via some other method: teleportation, dimension walk, etc. Such a return trip places the character in the same domain.

**Probability travel:** This power simply does not work, but the psionicist still loses 20 PSPs to find that out. It will not even enable him or her to return from a failed banishment.

**Teleport:** The wizard spell *teleport* has identical restrictions (see Chapter VI). Teleportation can never cross the borders of a domain. Any attempt to teleport outside of a domain simply deposits the character at the domain's edge.

*Power score*—The PSP cost is reduced by 20%, rounded up.

*20*—The attempt has no effect.

**Teleport other:** This science has the same limitation as teleport (directly above). It cannot move any creature any farther than the borders of a domain.

*Power score*—The PSP cost is reduced by 20%, rounded up.

*20*—Would-be teleporters are disoriented. They cannot cast spells, and they suffer a –4 penalty to all die rolls for 1d4 × 10 rounds.

## Psychoportive Devotions

**Astral projection:** This power does not work in the land of the Mists. Ravenloft does not allow any of its captive playthings to leave so easily.

**Dimension walk:** This power works as stated, with one minor exception. The dimension being crossed is the pocket dimension of shadow, mentioned in the banishment power (above). The character can be attacked by other creatures that have been banished (as the psionic power), but this is unlikely since they remain there for so short a time. There is a base 1 in 20 chance of encountering a banished being. Even then, the creature may choose not to attack or even contact the dimension-walking psionicist.

*Power score*—The psionicist receives a +2 bonus when rolling Wisdom checks.

*20*—Overcome with vertigo, the character can do nothing but retch for three rounds.

**Dimensional door:** This devotion is unchanged in Ravenloft, but it needs further clarification. Although Ravenloft does not allow inhabitants to journey to other planes or dimensions, sometimes they can enter the fringes of them. For example, the Border Ethereal can be entered, but not the Deep Ethereal. The edge of the plane of Shadow is also accessible. These same rules hold true for such spells as *dimension door*. The edge of the dimension is accessible, as described for the devotion in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*. This enables the character to travel using this devotion.

**Teleport trigger:** This devotion is unchanged in Ravenloft, but it does need to be clarified. It is not possible to set up a trigger for generic horror or fear checks—the psionicist cannot specify the trigger to be "whenever I need to make a fear/horror check." To do so is to introduce the mechanics of die rolling into the role-playing of the character. Player characters know nothing about fear and horror checks. However, it is permitted to specify a trigger like "whenever I see a vampire," which in many cases would be cause for a fear or horror check. The Dungeon Master should also keep in mind that the trigger uses the psionicist's perceptions of the world around him or her. If the psionicist doesn't know that a character is really a vampire, then the teleport isn't triggered in the above example.

## Telepathic Sciences

Undead are immune to a number of telepathic powers in Ravenloft. The sciences to which they are immune are psionic blast, superior invisibility, and switch personality.

Remember that all self-willed undead monsters in Ravenloft have the insidious ability to present a facade of innocent thoughts, which is completely independent from what they might really be thinking. (In this way, evil hides its true nature until it can spring upon the hapless adventurer.) As long as the undead keep up this barrier, they are practically immune to most telepathic sciences and devotions. At the Dungeon Master's option, if a psionicist rolls his or her power score, then the science or devotion operates normally on the undead creature. In this case, the normal effect listed for rolling a power score is ignored.

Most undead choose to keep this shield of innocence up at all times, but they can drop the masquerade at any moment and reveal their true nature to the invading mind. Plumbing the depths of such an alien and evil mind can drive a psionicist to the brink of madness (see Chapter III). The vampire is a special exception to this rule. When sleeping away the bright hours of day, the vampire is just a dead body. There is no mind to contact and no shield of false thoughts. It is highly unusual for vampires to dream or exhibit any mental activity at all when sleeping.

**Domination:** This science is basically unchanged in Ravenloft. Similar to the psychokinetic devotion control body, this power treads a thin line between good and evil. The temptation to be cruel or to force the dominated creature to perform evil acts can be all but overwhelming. If the psionicist uses this power for unnecessarily selfish, whimsical, or evil purposes, he or she must roll a Ravenloft powers check.

*Power score*—The maintenance cost is halved.

*20*—The victim knows that someone attempted to dominate him or her.

**Mass domination:** Same as domination.

**Mindlink:** This science is unchanged in Ravenloft. A mindlink is *not* cause for a madness check, even if the creature is undead or some other horrifying monster. The nature of the power is such that the psionicist does not plunge into the depths of the creature's mind.

**Mindwipe:** This power can be used to remove the memory of a source of fear or horror, thereby cancelling the effects of a failed fear or horror check. Only a single successful application of this science is necessary to do so. Since the memories are only sealed away, not destroyed, they can come back at a later time if freed by psychic surgery. Using this science does not prevent the loss of Intelligence, Wisdom, or experience levels as it would normally. Consequentially, it is not the optimal method for dealing with failed fear, horror, or madness checks.

*Power score*—The victim doesn't get a saving throw.

*20*—The power affects the psionicist instead of his or her intended victim.

**Probe:** This power can pierce the layer of false thoughts produced by some undead. All undead get a bonus equal to half their Hit Dice when defending against the probe. For example, a vampire (8 + 3 HD) enjoys a +4 bonus when defending against the probe. If the probe is successful, the undead monster's horrifying nature is intimately revealed to the psionicist, which is cause for immediate horror and madness checks.

*Power score*—Two questions may be asked per round.

*20*—The subject knows about the probe attempt and is probably not pleased. An undead monster may choose to let the

psionicist succeed (forcing a horror and madness check) or answer the question in any way it desires. The psionicist is unaware if such answers are false.

## Telepathic Devotions

As with telepathic sciences, there are some devotions in the discipline to which undead in Ravenloft are immune. Those powers are attraction, aversion, awe, daydream, ego whip, false sensory input, id insinuation, invincible foes, invisibility, phobia amplification, post-hypnotic suggestion, psychic crush, repugnance, sight link, sound link, taste link, and telepathic projection.

**Contact:** This devotion is unchanged in Ravenloft, and works normally against undead. However, this does not guarantee that the follow-up power will work. Keep in mind that contact does not provide any information about the mind or creature contacted. Also, a sleeping vampire cannot be contacted, for it is simply a dead body when at rest.

The cost to maintain contact varies with the level/Hit Dice of the target. The false thoughts that undead can raise enable them to lower their perceived level. This is a dangerous but useful ability: If a vampire passes itself off as a low-level human, it can also choose to lower the perceived level of its false-thoughts barrier, thus reducing the PSP/round cost for the psionicist. Undead cannot raise their perceived level, only lower it. For example, any psionicist who successfully contacts the vampire pays fewer PSPs/round to maintain contact. Once contact has been established, the vampire cannot alter the PSP cost, even if its true identity has been discovered—it is giving away a small advantage to the psionicist in exchange for the ability to further mask its presence. Most undead do not bother to alter their perceived level vs. psionics. The example of a vampire in disguise is one of the few exceptions.

Undead, lycanthropes, and the like are considered monsters when determining the life-order modifier for contact. This modifier affects the chances of success for contact. Humanoids impose no modifiers, but monsters such as undead and lycanthropes impose a –7 penalty. These creatures are not able to adjust this modifier. However, since the players should not be rolling the power-score check, they will probably not realize that the modifier is even there. After a few failed attempts to contact the creature, they may begin to suspect that something is not right, but there will be no definitive proof, particularly since other modifiers (such as distance) may be affecting the chances as well.

*Power score*—The contact is maintained for four rounds with the expenditure of any PSPs.

*20*—Further contact with this mind is impossible at this experience level.

**ESP:** This devotion is unchanged in Ravenloft. However, it can pick up only the false surface thoughts of undead unless they choose to let the psionicist in deeper. In that case, the psionicist is subject to a madness check. If he or she cannot understand the native language of the undead creature, a +2 bonus applies to the roll.

*Power score*—The first round of maintenance is free.

*20*—The psionicist develops a splitting headache and suffers a –1 penalty to all telepathic power-score rolls for one hour.

**Identity penetration:** This devotion works normally in Ravenloft. It is one of the few telepathic powers that can function on an undead creature. Success has its price, however. The psionicist must roll a horror check if he or she penetrates the identity of an undead creature.

*Power score*—No additional effect.

*20*—Until he or she gains another level, the telepath cannot penetrate the identity of the current target.

**Inflict pain:** This devotion is unchanged in Ravenloft, but using it to torture any creature is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

**Life detection:** By normal definitions, undead would not be detected by this devotion. In Ravenloft, undead are entitled to a saving throw vs. death when this power is used on them. If successful, the undead creature detects as a living, humanoid creature. Undead can choose to fail the saving throw if they suspect that the psionicist is scanning; this renders them undetectable through this devotion.

*Power score*—The psionicist can instantly detect everything within 100 yards in every direction. Undead are not allowed a saving throw to manipulate detection.

*20*—The telepath detects 1d6 creatures that aren't there. Undead are automatically detected as living if they so choose.

**Truthear:** Ravenloft protects its most cherished creatures with a veil of secrecy. Undead always appear to be telling the truth, even when it is obvious that they are lying. There are no mental telltale signs for the psionic devotion to determine the validity of a statement.

*Power score*—The psionicist recognizes a falsehood even when the speaker does not. If the target is an undead creature, the psionicist is able to detect only whether or not it *believes* the statement to be true.

*20*—The psionicist can't use this devotion effectively against the subject for 1d6 days.

## Metapsionic Sciences

Most of the powers in this discipline are not affected in Ravenloft. Psionic powers that affect other psionic powers are not the concern of Ravenloft and are therefore left alone.

**Appraise:** Like the precognition science (above), appraise attempts to part the veil of the future. In Ravenloft that ability has been given solely into the hands of the Vistani, and the strongest Vistani fortuneteller in the domain is instantly aware of the psionicist's attempt to do so. She can answer, herself, and provide any answer she wishes, including the truth.

*Power score*—The science works normally, giving a genuine appraisal of the situation. The Vistani are unaware of the attempt.

*20*—The psionicist can't use this science successfully again for 1d4 days.

**Aura alteration:** This science functions in Ravenloft as it is described in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*. However, some powerful curses may have a stiffer penalty than –6 for success, and the curses endured by the lords of domains cannot be broken at all. Infected lycanthropes are not cursed, and hence cannot be affected by this science at all. However, lycanthropes that attained their powers as the result of a curse can be affected.

*The Complete Psionics Handbook* states that an attempt to remove a curse, geas, or quest imposes a –6 penalty upon the chance of success. In Ravenloft this is still true for geases and quests, but curses come in many shapes and sizes. The strength of the curse determines its penalty (the definitions of these curse strengths can be found in Chapter V):

| Curse Strength | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Embarrassing | –2 |
| Frustrating | –4 |
| Troublesome | –6 |
| Dangerous | –8 |
| Lethal | –10 |

*Power score*—No other effect.

*20*—The full PSP cost of the power must be paid despite the lack of success. The psionicist cannot attempt to alter this aura until he or she achieves a higher experience level.

**Psychic surgery:** This science is unchanged in Ravenloft. It can be used to remove the effects of failed fear, horror, or madness checks. As

such, it is an *extremely* useful talent to have in the Demiplane of Dread.

**Ultrablast:** In most cases this science works normally in Ravenloft. However, undead of all types are immune to its effects.

*Power score*—Living creatures of 3 Hit Dice or less die if they fail their saving throws. Undead must roll a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or "pass out" for 2d6 × 10 rounds. Note that mindless undead are unaffected.

*20*—The initiator must roll a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation or die. If he or she lives, the psionicist loses the use of all powers for 2d6 days.

## Metapsionic Devotions

**Psychic drain:** There is little difference between draining a character's life energy, as vampires do, and draining psychic energy to the point of harm. If the psionicist uses this power to drain psychic energy and causes such damage, then a Ravenloft powers check must be rolled. In addition, such treachery is sometimes rewarded by the dark powers. Any draining that reduces the host to less than 50% of any attribute score requires a powers check.

*Power score*—The psionicist does not harm the host this time, regardless of how much he or she drains. If he or she drains a host below 50% of any attribute score, then a Ravenloft powers check still must be rolled.

*20*—Contact is broken.

**Retrospection:** The description of this devotion says that these loose, wandering memories still bear the stamp of the personalities that created them. In Ravenloft, the memories of domain lords are stronger than others. Also, they are more likely to know the answers to the type of questions characters will pose. As a result, there is roughly a 10% chance that any retrospection will gather in a memory from one of the many darklords of Ravenloft. If the nature of the question is such that only the lord of the domain would know the answer, the chance rises to 50%. Such memories are tainted with foul evil and horrors that should not be contemplated by ordinary mortals. Each psionicist in the convergence must roll a horror check. A bonus may be applied to the roll, depending upon the quality of the memory. Since these are memories on the wing, the horror check is relatively mild.

| Memory Detail | Modifier |
|---|---|
| Vague or incomplete | +2 |
| Complete | +1 |
| Complete and specific | 0 |

*Power score*—No horror check is necessary.

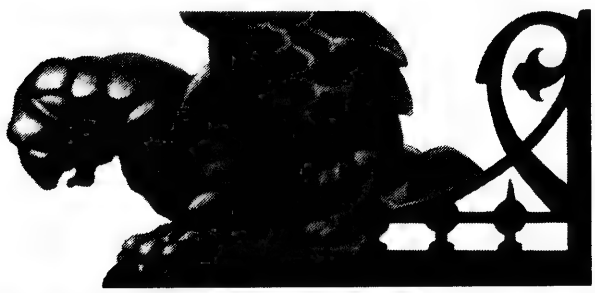
*20*—No other effect.

**Wrench:** This devotion can be used only to pull a creature into Ravenloft, not to force it onto another plane. The only exceptions are creatures that have a dual existence in the Ethereal Plane or the plane of Shadow. There is enough of a connection to allow the psionicist to push such creatures into the edges of those planes.

The Demiplane of Dread is tightly linked to the Negative Energy Plane. This means that it is more difficult to pull a creature that simultaneously exists in both planes entirely into Ravenloft. In effect, the Negative Energy Plane doesn't want to "let go." In game terms, the psionicist suffers a –2 penalty when using this devotion to pull a creature out of the Negative Energy Plane and into Ravenloft.

*Power score*—The creature is momentarily dazed and suffers a –2 initiative penalty for the next round.

*20*—No other effect.



# VIII: MAGICAL ITEMS IN RAVENLOFT

Like spells, magical items may work differently in Ravenloft. In most cases, the following rule of thumb applies: If a magical item imitates a spell, the item undergoes the same changes that the spell does (the Dungeon Master should consult Chapter VI for details).

This chapter covers standard magical items that have their own effects. A number of new items, including a few cursed ones, are described as well, but it would be impossible to discuss every known magical item from every known campaign world. The collection is far too vast, and it continues to grow. Dungeon Masters may even invent new items for their own campaigns while they incorporate items from other adventures or import items from other worlds. No matter what the circumstance, the guidelines below should provide enough information to determine the changes in any item brought into the land of the Mists.

## General Guidelines

*Planar travel is rarely allowed in Ravenloft.* If an item has any power related to planar travel, the function simply doesn't work. Sometimes the item sends its owner to another location in Ravenloft, and sometimes the would-be traveler goes nowhere. Any item related to planar travel *could* work properly, but only at the Dungeon Master's option. A final adventure in Ravenloft might revolve around discovering and using an item necessary to escape the demiplane.

*Magical items cannot summon normal animals (wolves, cats, and so forth) that do not dwell in the domain at hand.* Further, animals or creatures that are somehow summoned from other planes cannot go home the same way, and they probably won't be happy about it.

*Divination is weaker in Ravenloft.* No one can identify evil or goodness with a magical item; only law or chaos.

*Items that are wholly evil or that are used for evil purposes require a Ravenloft powers check.* This does not include cursed items or items that simply cause harm. To trigger the Ravenloft powers check, the owner must consciously choose to keep and use the item for evil purposes.

*Some evil items, particularly those based on necromancy, may actually work better in Ravenloft.*

## Frequency of Magic and Treasure

Magic, especially in the form of magical items and devices, is less common in Ravenloft than in other realms. Few, if any, magical items are created here. Compared to other worlds, not many people live in Ravenloft, and those who do have not lived there long. As a result, adventurers won't find piles of treasure just lying about for the taking. Wealth is not much of a driving force here; survival is. This doesn't mean Ravenloft is devoid of greed, or that magical items don't exist—they're simply uncommon. Nor does the ordinary monster keep an item it cannot use. If it hoards treasure, it must have a logical and important reason to do so. Otherwise, the "cupboard" may be completely bare. Treasure shouldn't ever accompany an encounter just because players expect it.

As a rule of thumb, Dungeon Masters should cut in half the usual chance that a given type of treasure is present. If random die rolls are employed to determine treasure, they should be taken care of before play begins. If the results call for a magical item, that item must fit the encounter logically. If it doesn't, assume that nothing is there. Don't continue to roll for other types of treasure.

Although magical items may be in short

supply, money is not. Characters can readily obtain payment for services rendered. (The folk usually aren't rich, but they give up what they have if the cause is good.) If the player characters rid a village of a powerful evil force, the village may reward the party. They may even offer one of those rare magical items they've been hiding—especially if that item will help the player characters destroy the village terror. Or, they may tell the player characters that such an item allegedly exists. The player characters (heroes that they are) would then embark on the quest to find it.

In many campaign settings, the search for treasure drives the characters (and their players), but this shouldn't be the case in Ravenloft. Here, adventurers succeed by keeping their wits and skins; if they foil an evil plot, they've excelled. Survival, in most cases, is its own reward.

## Intelligent Weapons

The ego of an evil, intelligent weapon rises 5 points in Ravenloft. (Weapons of good or neutral alignment are not affected.) If an evil weapon dominates its bearer, the weapon has a 50% chance of delivering itself to the lord of that domain. At the beginning of each week a character wields an evil, intelligent sword, he or she must make a Ravenloft powers check.

## Artifacts and Relics

Because of their unusual power and purpose, artifacts and relics may transcend the limitations of Ravenloft. At the Dungeon Master's option (of course), spells cast from an artifact or relic are unchanged by this demiplane, as are any spell-like abilities. These powerful items may even help characters escape from Ravenloft. An evil artifact may not want to leave, however. Furthermore, any character who owns an evil artifact or relic must make a Ravenloft powers check once per week.

## Common Magical Items with Uncommon Effects

The items listed below work differently in Ravenloft. An asterisk (*) means the item's use may require a Ravenloft powers check. A description of each magical item follows, supplementing the original text in other AD&D game books.

**✣ Table 14: Altered Magical Items ✣**

*Amulet of life protection*
*Amulet of the planes*
*Amulet vs. undead*
*Bag of beans*
*Bag of bones**
*Book of vile darkness**
*Bowl of commanding water elementals*
*Brazier of commanding fire elementals*
*Censer of commanding air elementals*
*Crystal ball*
*Cubic gate*
*Curdled death**
*Dimensional mine*
*Disintegration chamber**
*Flask of curses*
*Gem of seeing*
*Globe of serenity*
*Helm of telepathy*
*Horn of valhalla*
*Horn of valor*
*Law's banner*
*Libram of ineffable damnation**
*Medallion of ESP*
*Medallion of thought projection*
*Mirror of life trapping**
*Mist tent*
*Necklace of memory enhancement*
*Oil of etherealness*
*Phylactery of monstrous attention*
*Plate mail of etherealness*
*Potion of undead control**
*Powder of the hero's heart*
*Ring of djinni summoning*
*Ring of vampiric regeneration**
*Rod of rulership**
*Scroll of protection—undead*
*Sphere of annihilation**
*Staff of the magi*
*Stone of commanding earth elementals*
*Sword +2, nine lives stealer**
*Sword of life stealing**
*Sword of the planes*
*Talisman of ultimate evil**
*Teleportation chamber*
*Thought bottle*
*Trimia's catalogue of Outer Plane artifacts*
*Well of many worlds*

***Amulet of life protection*:** As long as the *amulet* is in Ravenloft, a captured psyche cannot leave the demiplane. If the *amulet* is removed from Ravenloft, the psyche can then depart.

***Amulet of the planes*:** Even if found in the Demiplane of Dread, this device simply does not work in Ravenloft.

***Amulet vs. undead*:** In Ravenloft, undead are more difficult to control. The *amulet* works one level below its usual capacity while in this demiplane. (Turning undead, itself, works differently in Ravenloft; see "Priests," in Chapter II.)

***Bag of beans*:** Each *bean* has a 20% chance to "sprout" a Ravenloft encounter.

***Bag of bones*:** In other campaign settings, this *bag* can be used to create a small army of skeletons (80 of them). The *bag* works only in battles where at least 100 creatures per side are involved. However, this condition is rarely met in Ravenloft. In the rare event that it is and this *bag* is used, double the normal number of skeletons appear (up to 160). The user must also roll a Ravenloft powers check.

***Book of vile darkness*:** The reading of this *book* requires a Ravenloft powers check. When the week-long reading is complete, the evil

priest gains just enough experience points to rise *two* levels, not the paltry half-level increase granted in other realms. The priest still gains 1 point of Wisdom. Characters of good alignment suffer a "dangerous" curse (see Chapter V) if their saving throw vs. spell (see the *DMG*) fails.

***Bowl of commanding water elementals***: The elemental cannot return to its native plane unless it finds a normal escape route from Ravenloft. If the elemental breaks free of control, it attacks the summoner.

***Brazier of commanding fire elementals***: See *bowl of commanding water elementals.*

***Censer of commanding air elementals***: See *bowl of commanding water elementals.*

***Crystal ball***: Ravenloft's lords are so much a part of the demiplane that the *crystal ball* cannot distinguish them from the fabric of the land itself. Other changes to the *crystal ball* are covered under the *clairvoyance* spell description (see Chapter VI) and other imitative spells.

***Cubic gate***: This device does not function in Ravenloft.

***Curdled death***: This aromatic oil is actually more powerful in Ravenloft. Its radius of effect extends to 10 feet instead of 5 feet. Using such an evil substance is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

***Dimensional mine***: Living creatures that are in the extradimensional space when the *mine* explodes are killed. They are not ejected into the Astral Plane.

***Disintegration chamber***: Placing someone in one of these *chambers* is cause for a Ravenloft powers check, even if the person to be disintegrated is the lord of a domain.

***Flask of curses***: In Ravenloft, this *flask* can confer even more horrid curses on the person who opens it. Consult the following subtable to determine the strength of the curse. Chapter V will help flesh out the details.

| Roll 1d10 | Strength of the Curse |
|---|---|
| 1–3 | Embarrassing |
| 4–5 | Frustrating |
| 6–7 | Troublesome |
| 8–9 | Dangerous |
| 10 | Lethal |

***Gem of seeing***: Consult the *true seeing* spell in Chapter VI—the same changes apply.

***Globe of serenity***: The bonuses of this *globe* are applied to fear and horror checks. Furthermore, the *globe* can nullify the effects of a failed fear check. If used on a person who failed a horror check, the character gets new check to attempt to recover from the horror.

***Helm of telepathy***: In Ravenloft, undead with low Intelligence or better can deliberately project thoughts, which a mind-reading character can detect. Usually the creatures send a false, reassuring message, but they can cause characters to roll madness checks, too. Undead cannot project thoughts when surprised or caught unaware.

***Horn of Valhalla***: As usual, the *horn* blower summons berserkers from Valhalla, who fight for him or her. In Ravenloft, however, the berserkers break free of the enchantment after six turns, and they cannot return to Valhalla unless they find their own escape. Understandably, the berserkers won't be pleased about the summons, but if they have battled for a "worthy" cause, the newly freed fighters will not attack the *horn* blower and his or her or companions. Instead, they simply will leave as a group, in search of route home. If they are ill used or forced to act in manner they find distasteful, though, the berserkers attack.

For every 25 fighters called, there is a 1% cumulative chance that a greater power of Valhalla appears to the wielder in Ravenloft. Not bound by the laws of Ravenloft, it claims its fighters, takes the *horn*, and vanishes back to Valhalla. If the fighters were ill used, it may even punish the wielder of the *horn*.

When the *horn* blower and his or her companions leave Ravenloft, they still may have to answer for their actions. For each berserker summoned while in the demiplane, there is a 1% cumulative chance that a greater power of Valhalla will appear before them and demand that they justify their actions, condemning them for trapping the berserkers in Ravenloft. At that point, the characters must make immediate reparations to the greater power or suffer consequences.

***Horn of valor***: This item functions as described for mobs and crowds of villagers: They receive a +2 bonus to their morale rolls for 1d4 × 10 rounds. Hearing it also enables a fleeing mob to roll a new morale check. If successful, the mob rallies and may once again approach monsters and the like. If used for a group that stands opposed to the mob, it lowers the mob's morale by 1 for 1d10 + 10 rounds.

***Law's banner***: All the effects of this item can be used on mobs and crowds of villagers. It is up to the Dungeon Master to determine if the mob or crowd is sufficiently lawful. Almost by definition, a mob is a chaotic group. However, if the crowd of villagers appears to be highly organized, the Dungeon Master might rule that it is sufficiently lawful to qualify for this magical item.

***Libram of ineffable damnation***: Evil characters who read this vile book in Ravenloft gain just enough experience points to rise *two* levels. Good characters who read the book become the victims of a "dangerous" curse. Otherwise, non-evil characters suffer the usual effects, as described in the *DMG*. Reading the *libram* requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Medallion of ESP***: See *helm of telepathy*.

***Medallion of thought projection***: See *helm of telepathy*.

***Mirror of life trapping***: Using this item to trap a life requires a Ravenloft powers check, but freeing a trapped individual does not.

***Mist tent***: Using this magical item can be highly dangerous in Ravenloft. There is a minimum 5% chance that the land will use the *tent* like the mists of Ravenloft. If used in the mists, themselves, the chance rises to 25%. The occupants are transported to some other location in the misty borders of Ravenloft. If the Dungeon Master needs to keep the characters in their original domain, the new location is still in that domain, at a new place along the border. Note that the mists have no compunctions about transferring the *tent* to a place above a lake or other potentially dangerous terrain.

***Necklace of memory enhancement***: This item has a vicious effect upon anyone who has to roll a horror check. While wearing the necklace, the owner gets no bonuses to horror checks for the passage of time—the effects of any failed horror checks never wear off. Prolonged use of the *necklace* (more than a week) under the weight of a failed horror check forces the wearer to roll a madness check. In Ravenloft, many things are best forgotten.

***Oil of etherealness***: This *oil* makes the wearer insubstantial, but in no case can he or she fully enter the Ethereal Plane and escapt the Demiplane of Dread.

***Phylactery of monstrous attention***: When donned by a priest in Ravenloft, this arm wrapping alerts the lord of the domain to the priest's location (within a mile). Only monsters native to the domain can be summoned by the *phylactery*.

***Plate mail of etherealness***: The wearer can become insubstantial, but cannot fully enter the Ethereal Plane and escape Ravenloft.

***Potion of undead control***: All undead are entitled to a saving throw to avoid the effects. Undead that are not mindless enjoy a +2 bonus to their saving throw. A lord of a domain automatically avoids being controlled. Keep in mind that intelligent undead may feign obedience to position themselves for attack. Controlling undead for personal gain puts the controller at risk. The user of this *potion* must make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Powder of the hero's heart***: This *powder* affects fear checks in Ravenloft. The +2 bonus applied to morale checks is also granted for fear checks. Horror checks are unaffected by the *powder.*

***Ring of djinni summoning***: The djinni appears and serves the wearer once. After that service, the djinni tries to return to its own plane—and quickly finds that it cannot. This is a violation of the pact of the *ring*, so the djinni is freed. If its former master was kind and reasonable, the djinni leaves to find its own exit from the demiplane. If its former master was cruel and harsh, the djinni attacks him or her.

***Ring of vampiric regeneration***: Undead do not provide healing hit points to the wearer. Instead, they send Negative Plane energy through the channel created by the *ring*, inflicting as much damage upon the wearer as they would otherwise have healed. The undead monsters still suffer normal damage. Each use of this *ring* requires a Ravenloft powers check, to a maximum of one check per week. (The *ring* can be used more often, however.)

***Rod of rulership***: Anyone controlling undead or extremely evil creatures for personal gain is at risk. In this case, the user of the *rod* must make Ravenloft powers check.

***Scroll of protection—undead***: Undead are more difficult to control in Ravenloft. The *scroll's* effects last only 5d8 rounds and restrain only 20 Hit Dice of undead.

***Sphere of annihilation***: Anyone who attempts to control this *sphere* must make a Ravenloft powers check.

***Staff of the magi***: The *staff* is incapable of planar travel in Ravenloft. Attempts to use it for planar travel do not expend any charges.

***Stone of controlling earth elementals***: The elemental can only return to its native plane by locating its own exit. Therefore, if it somehow gains its freedom, the elemental attacks whomever summoned it.

***Sword +2, nine lives stealer***: Each time this *sword* steals a life, a Ravenloft powers check is required.

***Sword of life stealing***: The swordsman must make a powers check each time this weapon steals a life.

***Sword of the planes***: Ravenloft lies within the Ethereal Plane; hence, this *sword* has a +4 bonus in the demiplane.

***Talisman of ultimate evil***: Using this item requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Teleportation chamber***: This arcane device cannot teleport anything outside of a domain when the domain's borders are closed. If they are not closed, then the chamber functions normally.

***Thought bottle***: It is possible for self-willed undead to place a thought in the *bottle* that reflects the monster's inner essence. Any mortal who opens the *bottle* and speaks the command word suddenly experiences the depths of evil of the undead monster's mind. This is cause for a madness check. Vampires and liches occasionally use this magical item as a trap for unwary hunters. Since they rarely lose any thoughts, these creatures have no other use for the *bottle*.

***Trimia's catalogue of Outer Plane artifacts***: The *catalogue* itself works almost as described. The sole exception is that there is almost always an additional item required besides the money to acquire the device. Some sample items are a drop of vampire's blood, a feather from a wereraven, a stone from the temple of G'Henna, etc. If the money and the other item are placed upon the book, the magical device appears.

The device that appears is one of the few ways to leave the Demiplane of Dread. However, in Ravenloft there is a 20% chance of a malfunction, far greater than the normal 5% chance. The device vanishes when used, regardless of success. If unsuccessful, the character remains in Ravenloft.

***Well of many worlds***: In Ravenloft, this item looks like a simple, seamless piece of black cloth. It radiates strong magic, but does not function in the demiplane.

## Ravenloft Magical Items

As mentioned earlier, adventurers won't discover many magical items in Ravenloft, and new ones are even fewer. Most magical items in this demiplane come from other worlds.

A select few items, however, appear to have burst into existence with the creation of a new domain, and these are outlined in the pages that follow. Ravenloft's dark powers have mysterious ways.

***Amulet of the beast***: Two versions of this *amulet* exist—one made of silver, the other of ivory. Both show the image of a wild, wolflike beast that is bound in chains. Each *amulet* is round and has a small hole at the top for threading a cord or chain.

The silver *amulet* functions only when worn by a lycanthrope. As long as the creature carries the amulet somewhere on its person, its lycanthropy is suppressed—even a true lycanthrope cannot change shape while holding it. No magical force prevents the item's removal, but the owner may protect it from theft by other means.

The ivory *amulet*, when touched to a character, gives its victim the symptoms of lycanthropy—though not the actual disease. (It has no effect on creatures who are already lycanthropes.) Most ivory *amulets* produce "werewolves," but a given *amulet* could mimic any form of the disease. The *amulet* is magically attached to its owner until a *remove curse* spell is cast. Even then, the victim must successfully save vs. spell to be free of the *amulet*. Not every victim desires such freedom, however. When the *amulet* is gone, though, so are the symptoms of lycanthropy.

***The Apparatus*:** This huge machine stands more than 30 feet tall and is 20 feet wide at the base. A glass globe, 15 feet high, rests upon a massive tripod made of wood and steel. The tripod lifts the globe some 15 feet from the floor. The globe encases a great, spinning ball of sulfur, and a network of rings made of cold-forged steel tops the glass sphere.

Two smaller globes, each the height of a full-grown man, are suspended below the large one. The pair is linked by a narrow glass neck, like an hourglass on its side. A 3-foot–wide trap door opens on the bottom of each smaller globe. A steel, tubular arch links each smaller globe to the mother sphere above.

A third, still-smaller series of globes rings the entire base of the tripod, linked together like a chain by thin glass tubes. A bewildering array of metal and glass—rods, wires, and plates—joins the circle of spheres to the two man-sized glass chambers.

Lightning energizes the *Apparatus*, and the steel rings on top focus electricity into the mother globe. To fully charge, the *Apparatus* requires 12 lightning strikes within the span of three hours; over a longer period the charge fades. The energy is converted into a magical force by the spinning ball of sulfur within the globe.

This contraption can perform a number of monstrous and misguided tasks. The first function is "transpossession": It can cause the exchange of minds between two intelligent subjects, even an intelligent creature and a man. The subjects must stand in the man-sized glass chambers, and on the twelfth lightning strike the psyches of the two individuals are exchanged. Both subjects fall unconscious for one to three turns as the transpossession takes place. All mental abilities go with the psyche, but all physical abilities stay with the body.

Any attempt to determine the alignment or true nature of a transposed subject fails. Spells such as *know alignment*, *detect evil*, or *true seeing* detect as if the subject has a truly neutral alignment.

The second function of this machine requires the *rod of Rastinon* (see below). When the *rod* is placed in the glass tube connecting the two man-sized chambers, a subject's personality can be split in two. An intelligent subject must stand in one of the man-sized globes, and on the twelfth lightning strike the psyche splits. In a flash, a duplicate of the subject appears in the adjacent chamber. Physically they are twins, but mentally they are unique. As of this writing, the split has involved only good and evil, separating the dark side from the light, but other divisions may be possible.

The "dark side" is a being of such evil that Ravenloft's dark powers will envelop him or her, granting a lordship and a domain. They may also the creature great powers, and transform it physically. Meanwhile, the subject will immediately seek to destroy its other half, because only then will it feel secure.

According to legend, the *Apparatus* can also rejoin the psyches it has divided. Both halves must occupy the globes, with the *rod of Rastinon* in place. On the twelfth strike, their psyches join and the original subject is restored. Theoretically, two normal subjects, each unique and whole, might be forced to share one body through this process. The stronger body would harbor the two psyches, while the weaker body would become a withered, empty shell.

Use of the *Apparatus* requires a Ravenloft powers check. Note that it is featured in the adventure module *Thoughts of Darkness* (9364).

***The cat of Felkovic*:** This delicate jade statuette stands barely 1 inch high. It is a small domestic cat with a contented expression, sitting on a jade base. The statuette closely resembles a *figurine of wondrous power*, though it is not one of the forms normally listed for that item.

When someone tosses the figurine to the ground and utters a command word, the *cat* becomes a smilodon (see "Cat" in the *Monstrous Manual*). The *cat* obeys whomever commanded it to animate.

The *cat* is harmless as long as it's fed. Like many predators, it needs food once a day. If it is recalled before it has finished eating, the kill (or corpse) becomes part of the figurine, appearing in miniature beneath the *cat*'s paw on the base. Later, the owner may notice that the carrion has vanished.

Each day the *cat* goes hungry, it animates on its own and hunts for food. It transforms itself at night and attempts to do so when no one is watching. When it makes its first transformation under a new owner, it becomes only a house cat, satisfied by a bird or mouse. Each day that hunger triggers a subsequent transformation, it becomes a larger, more ferocious cat. It hunts and kills the easiest and most appropriate prey, which eventually may be its owner.

When hunger has animated the *cat*, the owner cannot control it. In fact, it is 100% immune to any spell or spell effect. Only magical weapons can harm it.

| Cat Type | Hit Dice |
|---|---|
| House cat | 1 |
| Giant lynx | 2 + 2 |
| Cheetah, mountain lion, or leopard | 3, 3 + 1, or 3 + 2 |
| Jaguar | 4 + 1 |
| Lion or tiger | 5 + 2 or 5 + 5 |
| Spotted lion | 6 + 2 |
| Smilodon | 7 + 2 |

***Finger of commanding*:** This item looks like a simple finger bone with jeweled knuckles. It radiates an aura of summoning. When the proper command word is spoken, it enables the holder to raise and command up to 6 Hit Dice of zombies or skeletons. The bodies must be normal corpses. This item does not usurp control over existing zombies or skeletons. The effects last for one hour, and it can only be used once per day.

Using this magical item calls for a Ravenloft powers check.

***The holy symbol of Ravenkind*:** This ancient platinum medallion was once worn by the high priest of Castle Ravenloft (in prime-material Barovia). The priest lived (and died) before Strahd made his pact with darkness and cursed the entire land. The medallion is a powerful holy symbol for lawful good.

The *holy symbol* is shaped like the sun, with a large crystal embedded in the center. Symbols of light and truth surround the crystal. When forcefully presented toward any undead creature, the medallion adds +2 to the priest's die roll to turn the creature. When presented against vampires, it flares with the light of the sun for 1d10 rounds. The medallion can give off this burst of sunlight only once per week.

***Mirror of reflecting*:** This magical *mirror* shows the true appearance of anything reflected in it. It parts the veils of illusion and invisibility, but it does not otherwise reveal magical effects. It radiates an aura of alteration. The *mirror* can be of any size, but is usually about 3 feet wide by 5 feet tall. Strahd is particularly fond of this magical item because it shows his reflection, even though he is a vampire. It does not reveal his undead nature and would not reveal the existence of any magical spells that might be affecting him, however.

***Ring of reversion*:** This *ring* appears to be a simple iron band with a blood-red garnet. The band is inscribed with ancient runes. The *ring* enables the wearer to force a shapechanger or polymorphed creature to revert to its true, original form. The *ring* also can reverse the transpossession of psyches (see the *Apparatus*, above), *magic jar* spells, and spells with similar functions. Only a priest can use this *ring*. While wearing it, he or she must touch the *ring* to the body of the intended target, who is allowed no saving throw.

If the target has been transpossessed (the mind is in a strange body, while another mind occupies the original body elsewhere), the other body must be within 50 miles, and it must be alive for the *ring* to be effective. The *ring* cannot change the condition of either body; damage and wounds stay the same. Each mind, and all its attendant problems or enchantments, simply returns "home."

A transpossessed creature can sense the power of the *ring*, even if he or she doesn't know the exact effects. If the target prefers to remain in his or her current body, the creature or character feels great danger when the *ring* is near. He or she will flee or attack, depending on the situation and his or her personality. Conversely, a transpossessed creature who prefers the old body feels great hope in the presence of the *ring*. He or she will do anything to get the *ring*, even charging blindly and attacking if necessary. A transpossessed player character must make a Wisdom check to resist such bold, foolish action.

***The rod of Rastinon*:** This transforming crystal of wondrous power is the key to the *Apparatus* (see above). To date, no other use has been discovered. Without this *rod*, the *Apparatus* can only exchange minds between bodies; it cannot split or rejoin a single psyche.

Unlike other magical *rods*, this is not one with charges. It is a crystal shaft 2 feet long and a half inch in diameter. Silver sparks occasionally flicker inside, quietly crackling.

If anyone deliberately tries to break the *rod*, the chance of success is 5% per round of effort (noncumulative). The secret of making the *rod* has been lost. According to legend, several were made, but only one has been recovered so far.

***Scroll of return*:** A character must spend a full turn reading this scroll. If the reader is interrupted, he or she can start again at a later time without penalty. Once the reading is complete, the scroll bursts into flames. Glowing sparks drift toward the heavens, where evidently they burn a hole through the fabric of space. The result is a portal about the size of a door, which remains open for one full turn,

leading into the Prime Material Plane. The exact location is another question—it appears to be random.

***Soul searcher medallion***: This *medallion* is actually a small crystal orb that hangs from a plain silver chain like a pendant. The crystal enables the bearer to perceive the true psyche of a creature. When the bearer holds the *medallion* and steadily concentrates upon it, the crystal expands until it is 2 feet in diameter. (A character whose Strength is less than 16 must use both hands to hold the enlarged crystal aloft.) The bearer can take no other actions while using the orb. If concentration is broken, the orb returns to its original size and weight.

When the bearer gazes into the orb, he or she sees motes of light swirl within it for 1d4 rounds before it clears. At this point, the bearer can concentrate on examining any single individual within 60 feet. The device shows the user an image of the true nature of that creature. The orb actually acts as a *true seeing* spell, unhindered by the effects of the Demiplane of Dread. It reveals true alignment as well as any charms or curses, possessions, polymorphs, illusions, etc. The bearer learns the complete truth. This does not mean that he or she discovers the target's combat numbers or forms of attack. Rather, the *medallion* strips away any lies or misinformation the creature is able to project.

The pendant is very fragile, and any fall requires a saving throw vs. crushing blow to avoid destruction. Also, if the bearer wears it in combat, the item could be similarly damaged: If an opponent rolls a natural 20 in an attack, the *soul searcher medallion* must make a successful save vs. crushing blow to avoid breaking. If it is put into a protective container, it is not subject to these dangers.

***Spear +1, heartseeker***: This unusual wooden *spear* is carved from a single piece of ash. The tip is carved right onto the shaft and is obviously also wooden. It radiates an aura of enchantment. As a normal weapon, it has a +1 enchantment and inflicts normal damage despite the apparent frailty of its tip. When used against a vampire, it is always capable of causing damage if the attack roll is successful, even if the vampire is immune to +1 weapons. Any successful hit on a vampire is to the heart, effectively driving the shaft, as if it were a stake, through the organ. The vampire is then vulnerable to decapitation and sanctification, according to the normal rules for vampires detailed in the *Monstrous Manual*.

***Sword of Arak***: Drow wizards created this *sword*, and no human was meant to hold it. The drow have lost the *sword*, however, and no one knows its current location. And as Arak has disappeared from the Demiplane of Dread since the Grand Conjunction, the weapon's status is even further in question.

To any physical and magical examination, the item appears to be and performs as a *sword of sharpness +2*, but it also carries an evil curse: a horrid thirst for blood. Once per day, it must kill or help to kill a creature no smaller than a large dog. The *sword* is not required to deal the fatal blow, but blood must spill from the wound of the blade, and the victim must die no more than an hour after those first drops flowed.

Each day the *sword's* thirst is not quenched, its owner suffers, losing 1 point from each mental attribute (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma). However, the character simultaneously gains 1 point of each physical attribute (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution). After the first such adjustment, the owner becomes so fond of the blade that he or she dares not let it out of sight. If someone forcibly separates the owner from the sword, he or she will do anything to regain it.

When one or more of the character's mental attributes drops to 3, the conversion is complete. He or she is now bestial—a monster that looks like an ogre—and the Dungeon

Master runs the character. Usually the beast will have superhuman physical abilities at this point, with scores above 18, and its only goal is to satisfy the blade's thirst for blood. The creature may embark on a mindless rampage or, if it has a shred of Intelligence left, begin a series of clever, fiendish murders.

If the *sword* is removed from the character's possession before any mental attribute drops to 3, he or she begins to recover gradually. Each day, 1 point of each mental ability is regained, while 1 from each inflated physical score is lost. Until this process is complete, the owner still covets the sword and is unable to resist the urge to pursue it.

Once the conversion is complete, even removing the *sword* will not cure the monster. Only powerful magic (such as a *wish* spell) or the monster's death can remove the curse. A *remove curse* spell may appear successful, but it provides only temporary relief.

Wielding the *sword of Arak* always requires a Ravenloft powers check.

***Wolfspaw*:** This item seems to be a simple peasant charm. It is a wolf's paw stuffed with wolfsbane, with a leather thong of suitable length for hanging around a person's neck. The bearer of this charm radiates a 10-foot–wide circle of protection that prevents all wolves, dogs, or other canine species from entering. Vampires in wolf form, werewolves in wolf or wolfman form, and even gnolls are kept at bay.

***Zombie blood*:** This horrid potion can turn a normal person into a zombie for 1d4 + 1 days. It is colorless, odorless, and tasteless, making it easy to slip into food or drink. The potion can be attuned to a single master if that person stirs the potion with a finger prior to giving it to the victim. Once consumed, the person mentally becomes a zombie. His or her body is still alive, but he or she does nothing without explicit orders. If the potion was stirred, then the zombie obeys only that person. Otherwise, the new zombie obeys any order. The victim does not even eat or sleep unless commanded. He or she cannot feel pain and is immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells, just like a zombie.

In combat, the imbiber retains hit points and saving throw values, but values for THAC0, damage, and so forth are the same as a normal zombie. The character is still affected by physical damage and can be poisoned. The person also can be turned just like a zombie, but cannot be destroyed with a holy symbol. If the result of a turning attempt would destroy a normal zombie, the effects of the potion are negated immediately.

Using this potion is cause for a Ravenloft powers check.

## Cursed Objects

A few dire objects of artifact status have been discovered in Ravenloft, but not as many as one might think. Those who attempt to create such instruments of evil are usually consumed by their own dark plans before they can complete them, and others who have the misfortune to possess one frequently take the item into oblivion with them.

Cursed objects are not particularly effective in a RAVENLOFT adventure if the Dungeon Master simply sticks a player character with one. They are best used as coveted objects of twisted nonplayer characters, who will wreak havoc if allowed to wield them. They can also be dangled before the heroes, tempting as a piece of forbidden fruit, but with the consequences of their use discernible to those who observe and think before acting.

## The Blood Coin

For many, the sin of avarice has been so tempting that all other considerations are set aside. This small token is a symbol of that seductive evil. As is often the case, its simple and pleasing appearance belies the great malevolence that lingers within its metal.

**Description:** This *coin* resembles a normal silver piece. The engravings on the face and back always appear to be just what the owner expects. If it is found in a strange land, the owner will likely expect it to be a coin of that realm. Otherwise, he or she is most likely to see it as one stamped with the markings of his or her own homeland. Since the markings of coins are of little interest to most adventurers, it can be passed from person to person and nobody will see anything strange. In fact, if one person takes the *coin* and describes the stamp on it, anyone in earshot will expect to see that stamp, and of course they will. The only distinguishing mark on the *coin* is a small red smudge that cannot be wiped off. Casual handling will not reveal the red stain.

**History:** Before the Grand Conjunction, Hoorku Mishkov was a young merchant of Borca. Charm, avarice, and deception were his hallmarks. Most Borcan merchants stayed within the borders of that domain and Dorvinia, plying their goods along well-known, safe routes. Their profit margin was narrow, but large enough to live comfortably.

Hoorku was convinced that he could make a larger profit by setting off for new lands. His aspirations for greater wealth led him down a seldom-used, southerly road. With a small caravan of goods, he set off to find new trade routes.

The road south led to Gundarak. In that foul land he lost his entire caravan. Lord Gundar's son took it all as "tribute," but he allowed the young merchant to keep one item of his choice. Rather than taking a horse so he could return quickly to Borca, the foolish merchant kept an enchanted gem, which simply glowed whenever it touched true silver.

Instead of heading for home, the intrepid Hoorku journeyed still farther, on to the misty land of Invidia. There he met a Vistani woman in a colorful wagon by the water. She was young—only 20 years of age—but her heart was bitter. Unbeknownst to Hoorku, this was Gabrielle Aderre, at that time a new darklord of Ravenloft (see Chapter III in *Domains and Denizens*).

Hoorku saw an opportunity for profit in Gabrielle, so he wooed her ardently, intending to steal what he could of her money. She was flattered, but she spurned him with the tale of her mother's dire prediction. In a flash of inspiration, Hoorku produced the magical gem and claimed it would allow a woman to bear a normal, healthy, good-natured child, no matter the race or disposition of either parent. Gabrielle's desire to break the bonds of her curse overrode her prudence, and she let Hoorku seduce her. Of course, he made her pay him for the gem, extracting every coin in her possession.

Later, while Hoorku lay sleeping, Gabrielle used her magic to determine the workings of the gem and immediately discovered its true worth. In her fury, she almost slew her young suitor in his sleep. Then an evil idea began to coil in her mind. With her magic, she caused Hoorku to sleep for many days. During that time she fashioned the *blood coin*. Gabrielle found that creating such a cursed item was something she could do easily as lord of Invidia.

Before letting the knavish merchant awaken, Gabrielle placed the *blood coin* in his purse. Unaware of how long he had slept, Hoorku set off for the village of nearby Karina. He promised to return by nightfall, although he really intended to buy a horse and return to Borca. In the village, he could not resist shortchanging the stable master. Suddenly, blood began to run from Hoorku's eyes, frightening the poor wrangler to death. Confused and alarmed, Hoorku tried to wash his face, only to find that he was unable to stem the flow of red. The foul magic of the *coin* let him know immediately that it was responsible for his plight.

Hoorku stole a horse and fled the village. That night he dreamt of Gabrielle. In the dreams, she told him what she had done, and that the *coin* was his curse for betraying her. He

wandered Borca for years, trying to give away the silver *coin*, but popular legend spread quickly, warning that to take the *coin* is to assume the curse of the weeping beggar. (To this day horror stories are told of a weeping beggar in blood-soaked clothes.) Hoorku Mishkov died a broken man, clutching the *blood coin*.

**Powers:** If examined with a *detect magic* spell, the *coin* shows a faint aura of alteration. Anyone possessing this *coin* is able to cheat or swindle any living creature without getting caught, although creatures that have magic resistance are allowed to roll for a chance to avoid the persuasive effects of the *coin*. A swindle can occur during any exchange of properties. For example, the owner could convince a wealthy merchant that a bit of broken pottery is worth 10,000 gold pieces. The purchaser is under no particular geas to buy, but is utterly convinced of the value of the item. In most cases, the buyer will go ahead with the exchange unless there are other immediate and pressing needs for what he or she would be giving up.

**The curse:** The owner of the *blood coin* weeps tears of blood at the rate of one round per silver piece swindled (10 rounds per gold piece). The subtable below is included for the Dungeon Master's convenience.

| Gold Pieces Swindled | Approximate Weeping Duration |
|---|---|
| 10 | 1.5 hours |
| 100 | 17 hours |
| 150 | 1 day |
| 1,000 | 1 week |

The owner cannot feel the tears running down his or her face, but they are plainly visible to everyone else. The blood stains anything it touches, but it is normal blood, which can be washed out if quickly caught.

Anyone seeing the owner's eyes dripping blood can be required to roll a horror check. This is a relatively mild event, so a +2 bonus is applied to the roll unless the owner's clothing, face, or gear is covered in blood. For example, a character who falls asleep will weep through the night, drenching everything in blood. Anyone seeing this person would truly be horrified at the sight of a person lying in a large pool of blood. Even the owner of the *blood coin* must roll a horror check (with no bonus) the first time he or she sees what is happening. Thereafter, there is no need to roll further horror checks for this effect. However, if the owner fails the horror check, the effects are permanent until he or she can get rid of the *coin*.

If the owner of the *blood coin* is not currently weeping, he or she can make a quick fortune. Once the weeping begins, though, the swindler is unlikely to be able to spend those ill-gotten gains. He or she could well go cold and hungry, sleeping in a damp alley on a pile of coins.

Anyone weeping blood can be automatically trailed and hunted by animals or creatures using the sense of smell. Rangers and the like get a +4 bonus for tracking such a person. Worse still, vampires can scent the blood at a distance of 100 feet per age category.

Until the first time the owner attempts to swindle or cheat someone, the *coin* can be given or thrown away, but it cannot be used for a purchase unless it is the last coin in the person's purse (otherwise, the *coin* will automatically return to the purse and be replaced by a coin of the same or higher value). Once its possessor tries to cheat someone, the *coin* becomes attached to him or her and helps with that bargain. The user can feel the power of the *coin* at work and can tell that it is responsible for any success in the deal. From then on, the *coin* appears to be coated in dried blood that cannot be wiped off.

Once it has found an owner, the *coin* is not easily discarded. If given away or used to make a purchase, it reappears in the owner's purse as described above. If thrown away, the same thing happens, with another coin taking the place of the lost *blood coin*. It remains out of its

# VIII: MAGICAL ITEMS IN RAVENLOFT

owner's pocket only as long as he or she stays within 30 feet of it. It cannot be melted or destroyed by normal means.

To be rid of it, the owner must give away all earthly possessions and wander the world as a beggar for a full year. The only retainable possessions are rags for clothes and the *blood coin* itself. At the end of the year, the owner is able to give it to anyone. Nothing may be bought with the *coin*, nor can it be dropped in any sort of coin box, nor can it simply be thrown away. The owner must find someone willing to accept the *coin*. He or she doesn't have to explain the nature of the *blood coin* to whoever would take it, but most natives of Ravenloft are too suspicious to blindly accept gifts from strangers. Player characters, on the other hand, are another case altogether. . . .

## The Fang of the Nosferatu

There are few things as vile and dark as the undead. These masters of evil move beneath the fleeting light of the moon, feeding upon the human race like wolves upon sheep. The *fang of the nosferatu* was forged in their image and placed into the hands of man. It is hard to imagine a more sinister gift.

**Description:** The blade of this dagger is of hardened steel, with strange flowing symbols etched into the surface. The grooves of the lettering have been filled with ruby dust, giving the appearance of having been written in blood. The handle is wrapped in an odd, pebbled black hide, thought to be mind flayer or doppleganger skin. The end of the pommel holds a ruby mounted in a steel setting. The guard is an elongated oval, with the surface facing the blade carved to resemble a vampire with bared fangs. The eyes are filled with ruby dust, like the symbols etched into the blade.

**History:** This cursed dagger was once the closely guarded possession of an assassin named Mordal. It was a gift from the nosferatu vampire Baron von Kharkov, lord of Valachan. Mordal betrayed his master, so the vampire stole the dagger and imprisoned him. Kharkov encased the dagger outside the assassin's cell, just out of reach, and Mordal died a little each day as the dagger was denied its blood. During every full moon, the baron slaughtered animals with the dagger, restoring Mordal to his normal health. However, since he never took the life of an intelligent creature with it, 1 hit point was permanently lost every month—it took the assassin almost three years to die.

Upon Mordal's death, the dagger vanished. Legend holds that the ghost of the assassin took the dagger and fled Valachan, but nobody dares ask Baron von Kharkov about the matter. However, rumors have surfaced that claim the weapon passed into the island domain of Zherisia, where it remains to this day.

**Powers:** The *fang of the nosferatu* is chaotic evil in alignment. It has both an Intelligence and ego of 17. While it cannot speak aloud, it whispers telepathically in the language of its owner, cajoling and coercing him or her to use it. The blade shows an aura of necromancy when examined with a *detect magic* spell.

The item functions as a *dagger +3*, and the extra 3 points of damage that it inflicts represent the dagger's drinking of the blood of its victim. If left in a living body, it drains an additional 3 hit points of blood each round. Each successful attack restores 1 hit point to an injured owner (and only 1 per successful attack, even if the blade inflicts several points of damage).

The *fang of the nosferatu* grants other powers to its owner as well. While the knife is in his or her immediate possession, the owner can shapechange (as the spell) into a wolf or bat. In these forms he or she has the maximum hit points for that type of creature. If the owner's true form has fewer hit points due to wounds, then the animal form has the same number of remaining hit points as well. (Changing shape does not recover any lost hit points.) None of the owner's equipment changes with him or her, except the dagger. If the owner already has a shapechanging power, then the blade grants

the power to change into any animal form (from size S to L), but not that of a monster or other humanoid.

The knife's single greatest power is to confer invulnerability upon its owner for 13 years. To enjoy this benefit, the wielder must commit six murders on six consecutive nights, killing each victim at the stroke of midnight. For the next 13 years, the murderer has 90% resistance to all damaging magical attacks and is immune to damage from all but the most powerful weapons (+5 enchantment or better). In addition, the owner does not age during the period of invulnerability—as long as he or she physically possesses the knife. Without it the owner ages normally, but remains invulnerable.

Finally, the *fang of the nosferatu* acts as a conduit for its victim's emotions, drawing forth their pain and terror and transmitting these feelings to the person wielding it. Anyone who is not of chaotic evil alignment can be prompted to make a horror check with a –4 penalty the first time he or she experiences this flood of tortured sensations. Each subsequent use by *any* character requires a madness check (see Chapter III).

It is said that wearing gloves can protect the wielder from the black powers of the *fang*, but no one has ever bragged of having done so.

**The Curse:** Like the nosferatu for which it is named, the *fang* thirsts for the blood of living creatures. Animal blood will suffice, but once per month the *fang* requires the blood of an intelligent creature. Each point of blood damage that it absorbs satiates the knife for a day, but it cannot remain satiated for longer than seven days, regardless of how much blood it absorbed in its last attack. Any day that the *fang* is not satiated, it draws 1 hit point from its owner's normal maximum value, even if the dagger and its owner are far apart. However, if they are in different domains (or different planes of existence), the effects are temporarily halted until they are reunited. Hit points lost in this manner can be recovered only by using the dagger or with a *heal* or *wish* spell.

The dagger bonds with its owner as soon as it has been used to draw blood—neither its useful effects nor its curses apply until this time. Once bonded, the new owner becomes immediately aware of the blood requirements of the blade and the permanency of the bond. Furthermore, the owner should be reluctant to give away the blade, for if another creature has it and doesn't use it, the true owner will slowly wither and die at 1 hit point per day. The current owner must die before a new owner can be selected.

Anyone using the *fang* is subject to a Ravenloft powers check with a 15% chance of failure. Using the knife to obtain invulnerability is an "act of ultimate darkness," which means that the check automatically fails.

The *fang of the nosferatu* is featured in the RAVENLOFT adventure module *Hour of the Knife* (9456).

## The Timepiece of Klorr

This unusual pocket watch was brought into Ravenloft from an unknown world more than 200 years ago. Few have learned of its existence without owning it for themselves, and they never lived long enough to pass on the story of its wondrous nature.

**Description:** The *timepiece of Klorr* is crafted from an unusual alloy of gold, silver, and bronze. It is circular in shape, roughly 2½ inches in diameter, and it has a hinged lid that snaps down to protect its face. The *timepiece* hangs from a slender chain fashioned from the same indestructible alloy as the watch itself. The metal from which the watch is made does not tarnish and cannot be harmed by any known force. Thus, the watch looks exactly as it did when it was first created. Indeed, there is evidence to indicate that the watch has actually become brighter over the years, although this might be an error caused by the scarcity of accounts of its existence.

The casing itself is ornate and carved with many dark and sinister shapes. Many of them

resemble the twisting and writhing forms of anguished creatures, while others are those of fiends that torment them. The hinges on the lid and the clasp that secures the cover are fashioned in the image of skeletal claws.

The face of the watch is white in color, apparently some form of crystal, although its exact composition is unknown. A glass lens covers the face, but like the rest of the watch, it is impervious to any manner of damage. The face is numbered in an ornate script, from 1 to *13*. The movement of the hands is sharp and steady, producing an audible click with the passing of each second. Mysteriously, the hands never seem to pass between the hours of 12 and 13. Even if one watches the face of the *timepiece* carefully, the hands seem to click from 12:59 past 13:00 and directly to 1:00.

If opened in darkness, the white crystal of the face emits a soft glow so that the time may be easily read. No form of magical darkness can prevent the holder from seeing the illuminated dial, although it cannot be used to shed light upon surrounding objects in such a situation. That this effect is magical cannot be disputed, for at least one person who was totally blind is said to have looked upon the face of the watch and seen it quite clearly. It is said that even a blindfold or similar obstruction cannot prevent the watch's owner from seeing its face.

The back of the watch is set with an inscription that is unreadable unless viewed with a *read magic* spell. When this is done, the following verse becomes clear:

*By my power the sands are stayed,*
*The hour of death is long delayed,*
*The grip of time can be unmade,*
*But beware the price that shall be paid.*

**History:** The *timepiece* was created some 350 years ago by Klorr, a watchmaker in a land outside of and unknown to Ravenloft. Klorr had always been fascinated by clocks and timepieces of every description. In fact, his love for these objects passed the bounds of any reasonable man, becoming nothing short of an obsession. His home was filled with all manner of timepieces, each kept in perfect working order and synchronized so that they differed from each other by not so much as a second. It was said that the cacophony of an hour chiming in Klorr's shop was nearly enough to drive one mad. Perhaps that accounts for the creation of the twisted *timepiece of Klorr.*

One day, it occurred to Klorr that there was only one timepiece in his home that he could not regulate or control: the beating of his own heart. Once he noticed it, the dissonance began to prey upon his mind, as the throbbing in his chest never fell into synchronization with the staccato clicking of the gears and springs of his countless clocks. Eventually the irreconcilable pulses drove him mad, and he vowed that he would not permit his own heart to betray the perfect rhythm of his many timepieces.

Klorr spent years researching magical powers that he would employ to create his next watch. He sought out a race of master metalworkers and learned the secrets of their craft so that he might manufacture the watch from a metal no earthly hand could damage. He pursued the foul and accursed magic of the necromancer and gained knowledge of the functioning of the living heart. He explored the extradimensional magic of the Outer Planes and sought the guidance of some diabolical presence there to aid him in the last stages of his efforts. In the process, the watchmaker stopped aging and no longer required food or drink. The watch became the master of his fate, not the fleeting fancies of time.

To his lasting delight, when Klorr completed his pocket watch, he found that it did indeed control the beating of his heart. With every thud of his pulse in his ears, the second hand snapped forward and a sharp tick split the air. Much to his despair, however, he found that the watch seemed to control the beating of his heart to an even greater extent than he had intended. It soon became clear that if the watch

were not wound each day—if it were allowed to slow and stop—his heart would match its gradual paralysis. Klorr realized that if the watch stopped, so would his heart.

Furthermore, whenever he used the watch to invoke one of its magical effects, Klorr found that a third hand appeared on its face. This hand ticked off minutes between the 12th and 13th hours on the clock's face, and a strange new urging pressed his mind. Before that hour had passed, he was forced to kill someone in order to satisfy the hunger of the *timepiece.*

Klorr soon found that he was unable to resist the urge to use the watch's magic, despite his desire not to do so. He also learned that the hunger of the watch was directly related to the exact power that he employed and the vitality of the person killed. Klorr found himself unable to hold out against the overwhelming magic of the watch, and he became locked in a cycle of killings. Each time he hunted, he used the powers of the watch. In turn, the item compelled him to kill again. This vicious cycle became the pattern of his life until he made a mistake, the victim escaped, and the *timepiece* claimed Klorr instead.

**Powers:** The *timepiece of Klorr* gives its holder many great powers, each of which can be used as often as desired. As soon as one is employed, however, the third hand appears on the face and the watch begins to count off the minutes of a thirteenth hour. If it has not been able to absorb sufficient life energy to satisfy its hunger by the end of that hour, it will drain the energy of its holder, utterly and irrevocably destroying him or her. Nothing, not even a *wish* spell, can restore life to one slain in this manner. Each time that one of the watch's powers is used, the holder of the *timepiece of Klorr* is moved to seek out and kill others of his or her race. The number of people that must be slain is determined by the power required to invoke a given spell effect. Each power of the watch is followed with a parenthetical number that indicates the number of (experience) levels of life energy that the watch must drain. Thus, if it were used to invoke a *featherfall* spell (1) and then a *haste* spell (3) by an elf, the owner would have to kill four 1st-level elves, two 2nd-level elves, or some other combination that would total four levels. The use of any of the watch's spells or spell-like abilities precludes taking another action in the same round.

The magical spells that are available to the holder of the *timepiece* are as follows: *feather fall* (1), *feign death* (3), *haste* (3), *hold person* (3), *hold undead* (3), *slow* (3), *extension I* (4), *distance distortion* (5), *extension II* (5), *hold monster* (5), *extension III* (6), *temporal stasis* (9), and *time stop* (9). All of these spells function as described in the *Player's Handbook.*

In addition to its general abilities, the watch has several unique powers, described below. Each of these powers also has a cost associated with it.

***Heal damage* (5):** At any time, the watch can be called upon to heal damage. The actual effect is equal to that of a clerical *cure critical wounds* spell, save that it can be used *only* on the keeper of the *timepiece.*

***Perfect time* (0):** This ability of the *timepiece* is an element of its nature and need not be invoked or paid for with lives. Nothing can upset the watch's ability to keep perfect track of the time. Even if it and its owner are placed in a state of temporal stasis, the watch keeps working. No known force can cause the *timepiece* to lose so much as a second.

***Successful saving throws* (3):** The holder automatically succeeds on any saving throw. This requires no thought on the part of the watch's holder. In fact, the holder cannot even opt to fail a saving throw. If the person holding the watch has not yet been bound to it, the use of this ability links him or her to the *timepiece.* This is the only power of the watch that does *not* count as an action of the holder. The only exception to this ability is the saving throw required to discard the watch (see below).

***Visibility* (0):** Another side effect of the watch's existence is the fact that its face cannot be hidden from its owner. As long as he or she is able to flip open the cover to reveal the watch's face, no magical or physical blindness or obstruction can prevent the owner from looking upon it and knowing the exact time. As with *perfect time*, this one is free of any obligation on the part of the holder.

**The Curse:** The watch has no power over someone until one of its abilities is invoked. This might be any of its spells or spell-like powers except for *perfect time* and *visibility*. Even the automatic power to successfully roll saving throws counts as a deliberate use, although the holder of the watch does not actually invoke this ability.

As soon as one of the watch's abilities is used, the holder becomes bound to it. From that point on, the owner's heart beats at a perfect 60 beats per minute. Like the watch, his or her heart becomes a perfect timepiece.

Once bound to the watch, the holder must personally kill the people required to repay the *timepiece of Klorr* for any powers used. Failing this effort, the watch claims him or her instead.

The *timepiece of Klorr* is a very difficult burden to be rid of. Once it has been taken up, the only time that an individual can attempt to discard it is when the watch's hunger has been sated, that is, when the third hand is not showing and the owner of the watch is not under an obligation to claim another victim.

At this time, a *remove curse* or similar spell has a chance to break the watch's tie to its owner. When the spell is cast, the recipient must roll a saving throw vs. spell. If the roll succeeds, the watch may be discarded simply by putting it down and walking away.

The *timepiece* cannot easily be unmade. It is rumored that only the heat of the Elemental Plane of Fire can reduce the *timepiece* to the base evil of which it is forged.

# IX: Techniques of Terror

*The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and inexplicable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint . . . of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the demons of unplumbed space.*

—H.P. Lovecraft

Easy to say. Not so easy to accomplish. Though fear, Lovecraft adds, is "the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind," evoking it can be difficult. It doesn't take much to create a single moment of acute revulsion, but true horror—that painful emotion which begins with apprehension and leads to palpitation and perhaps even sweat—that's tough to engineer.

This chapter explains some of the tools storytellers use to create fear. At the end of the chapter are additional tips for creating fear in a role-playing adventure.

## Believable Horror

Nothing in horror literature is real; it is merely imagined. But if the reader doesn't believe in that terrifying world, at least for a moment, then the mood and fear are never gained. And if the player in an adventure doesn't at some point fear for the very soul of his character, then the adventure is not really "horror."

Effective horror coaxes the audience into gradually dropping its defenses, into suspending disbelief until it's truly believed that the impossible may actually be possible. How is it done? How does one convince an audience that the shadows of nightmares offer a glimpse of something horrible and *real*?

The answer: With careful details, fully developed characters, and a familiar background that's somewhat warped.

## Details, Details

Details are important to any good story, but they're essential to effective horror. Color, mass, texture, taste, temperature, odor, sound, sensation—all of these add meat to the bones of a tale, all bring the "unreal" world to life. The reader of a tale of terror won't believe in the writer's world until he or she sees it, hears it, feels it.

The details needn't be gruesome, though. Often, they focus on the ordinary: the faint chilling breeze channeled through a keyhole as the heroine peers through it, the smell of sulfur in a lab, the sharp crack of a whip and the froth around a horse's mouth. Sometimes, just creating a good name for an imaginary item or place helps make it real. (Lovecraft used this to good effect. His fictional tomes of evil are so familiar that one might expect to find them in the local library.)

## Well-developed Characters

No character seems believable without a background and personality to drive him or her—especially a villain. Even "inhuman" characters have unique motivations that shape their behavior. They have history, opinions, mannerisms, habits, strengths, weaknesses, and obsessions. Such things should consistently guide a character's actions, like a code of conduct. Even if a story doesn't go into detail concerning a character's history, or immediately spell out strengths and weaknesses (and it probably won't), the audience will know when this underlying structure is completely missing. Without it, characters fall flat (and *are* flat). Villains that have no depth are not realistic, and no one will fear them.

## Strange yet Familiar

Warping the familiar is a tool used by many writers of fantasy fiction. C.S. Lewis described the convention as "a familiar toad in an imaginary garden." In the case of terror, most especially that of the Gothic tradition, the idea is to make the fantastic (or horrific) more plausible by blending it with objects and places that the reader knows well. The traveler seeking shelter for the night in a woodsman's cabin enters to find a ticking clock, a whistling kettle, and a warm fire. When some nameless monster rises from the ashes of the fire, both the hapless traveler and the reader are more likely to accept it as real—and to fear it.

Like the fiend who dons a veneer of gracious manners in order to gain invitation to a victim's home, familiarity is the vehicle that opens a door to the subconscious and lets the horrors waiting there come out. Lovecraft excels at this technique. His New England landscapes are frightening because they're warped, but they're also believable because they're familiar:

*. . . the briar-bordered stone walls press closer and closer against the ruts of the dusty, curving road. The trees . . . seem too large, and the wild weeds . . . obtain a luxuriance not often found in settled regions.*

A dusty road, a stone wall, a few weeds—nothing alien there. It's a strange yet ordinary world that lies somewhere beyond the roads we've already explored. A traveler might easily stumble across it, if he or she had the misfortune of taking the wrong turn. . . .

## Isolation

*If there were anyone to talk to I could bear it, but there is no one. . . .*
—J. Harker, in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

Children know the fear of being alone in the dark, or rather, the fear of not being *completely* alone. They dread feeling small and abandoned, facing the beast whose breath clouds the glass in the window. They stare, wide-eyed and quivering, at the phantom who takes shape in the shadows, the fiend who waits patiently for sleepy eyelids to drop (along with crucial defenses). Because then—the child believes—tender, young flesh can be consumed. And no one is there to stop it . . . no one is there to help.

It's no coincidence that Gothic (and other horror) tales are set in isolation. Few ever lose the fear of being alone, in the dark, beyond the familiar comforts of civilization, beyond the reach of someone who cares enough to shield him or her from harm. By day, a grown man may feel only frustration when a stalled motor leaves him stranded on a lonely country road. But it's a rare soul who can walk that same unfamiliar road in the dead of night and not feel his childhood fears rekindled, his imagination feeding on every hint of terror.

Isolation is not always physical; it can be social, too. A chasm separates the disinherited from their loved ones. An outcast walks alone even in a bustling city. Foreigners are isolated in strange lands, where language and custom create a circle they cannot enter. It is frightening to be cut off from human comfort when it is only inches beyond one's grasp. It can be doubly frightening to extend a hand to a friend in the dark and feel cold, bony fingers urgently clutching back.

In perhaps the worst twist of all, both setting and society conspire against the victim. Imagine this scene: Three boys—Jack, John, and Blake—set out for adventure on a sunny morning. The trio hikes for miles into the hills, unfettered by worry or care. At the summit, the boys create a special bond, pricking their fingers "like Indians" and rubbing them together to form a brotherhood of blood. Blake, too squeamish, only pretends to pierce his own skin. In heading homeward, they take the wrong path and lose their way. Storm clouds blacken the sky. The boys take refuge in an abandoned shack, consoled by each other.

As the storm rises, so does a strange throbbing within the shelter. The wood groans, twists, and splinters, and a mouth begins to form in the wall. Jack and John's hands begin to throb in time with the shack's own deafening beat. A tiny rivulet of blood flows from their fingertips. Only Blake is exempt. The others shrink away from him. Consumed with fear, Jack and John agree to toss Blake into the gaping mouth. The boy is left to fend off the terror—and the dear friends on whom he once depended—alone.

When the misty fingers of Ravenloft reach out and draw the unsuspecting in, these new "guests" are already isolated. The language is foreign, the people strange (or worse), the settings desolate. Gone is the relative security of other worlds. There are no sure-fire saving throws here, no white knights riding to the rescue. As an adventure develops, the characters may find themselves separated from their party one by one. As every fiend knows,

sudden isolation, especially in a dark, shadowy world where nothing is certain, can tear a wound even in the toughest, most heroic skin, leaving it open to evil's infection.

## A Villain in Control

Goodness, purity, and the hero never have complete control in a tale of horror, because lack of control makes him vulnerable. The hero, emboldened by past conquests (like many player characters) may believe he's his own master. In truth, he's more like a marionette. And someone—or something—lurks in the shadows, always pulling the strings.

The hero's control of his situation slips away subtly at first—so subtly he may fail to notice. Later, as the villain flaunts his or her powers, the victim's lack of control becomes obvious. Villain have their own techniques for toying with their victims' fates. Some use curses, while others preserve the illusion that the victim is gaining an advantage, only to shatter that belief just when the victim is most confident. But no matter who or what wrests control from the character, the result is the same: The character's actions rarely lead to an expected outcome, and they never have anticipated results.

## The Strange or Unfortunate Circumstance

Most victims do not seem blessed with good luck. If they were, they would not be victims. Circumstances "beyond their control" tend to undermine their complacency and eventually maneuver them toward danger: Trains run late; a broken watch causes a rendezvous to be missed; a gust of wind extinguishes a candle. This is the odd coincidence that fools ignore and the setback that heroes bravely dismiss by saying, "It's nothing we can't handle."

But as one setback follows another, even the fool is uneasy: A sudden downpour reduces a blazing fire to smoke and sizzling ash; the coach driver, who alone knew the route to safety, suddenly convulses and dies. At last, the bold hero is afraid, too. He anxiously awaits each new twist of fate because he realizes it will indeed be *twisted.*

## Entrapment

Be it a mouse or a man, every creature fears a trap. It's a matter of survival: The living cannot thrive in shackles, so whenever freedom fades, tension and fear are sure to rise.

Most traps involve physical confinement: A character is closed in a coffin and buried alive; the walls in an exitless room begin to move, threatening to suffocate their quarry if they do not crush him or her first; a damsel hides in a closet while the villain calmly stands outside, listening for the sound of her breath and the pounding of her tender heart. The hunted (and the haunted) fear being caught—and rightly so.

But not every trap is obvious. In Stoker's *Dracula*, Jonathan Harker doesn't realize he's imprisoned in the castle for days—he thinks he's a guest. Nor is every trap as literal as steel jaws crushing a rabbit's leg. It can be a web of deceit, an evil plot of tricks and betrayals that strip the hero of his defenses, one by one. Or it may be a trap of the victim's own making, created by a series of foolish mistakes. When the victim finds the options dwindling until no action is safe, he or she has fallen into the trap, and it may be more deadly than anything made of stone or steel.

## Assaults on the Body

Some victims are crippled by fear itself. Cowardice leaves them paralyzed, weak, and defenseless. Heroes tend to have a bit more backbone, so authors of terror frequently saddle them with a real physical weakness—one that limits their ability to respond to threats: A sprained ankle slows a character who tries to flee, or a cut on the hand limits the ability to hold a weapon. The tougher the victim is in spirit, the harsher the handicap tends to be. Some plucky protagonists are crippled or confined to a wheelchair. Others may be rendered blind, mute, or deaf, and often suddenly so by an unfortunate twist of fate. But most physical weaknesses only handicap characters slightly rather than render them helpless. That's how tension is preserved. After all, what fun is a game of *Cat and Mouse* if the mouse can't run?

The handicaps mentioned above are natural—they could befall anyone, without any obvious help from the supernatural. Even worse are the *unnatural* assaults on the body. When a leg sprouts scales and starts to ripple, a sprained muscle is tame by comparison. A few tiny puncture wounds are extremely unsettling if they appear when the victim is bathing alone. And a woman whose rounded belly shows the gentle kicking of a life inside can scarcely feel at ease if she is sure she wasn't pregnant 24 hours ago. Mutation, mutilation, invasion—the threat of these alone is enough to scare most people, and virtually all three occur when a character sprouts fur, fangs, and claws and begins to howl uncontrollably at the moon.

## Assaults on the Mind

The mind is a person's most private world, his or her most intimate self. Yet frequently evil ventures even there. It's the most horrid kind of invasion, the worst way to lose control.

The effect may be subtle at first: A victim suspects that his or her thoughts are no longer private, or that an idea was "implanted"; another struggles to deny what he or she knows to be true. ("I must have imagined the voice." "It haunted me in a dream.") Soon blackouts, telepathic messages, or strange visions wrest further control from the victim. The mind begins to doubt its own stability, and the victim questions every perception. When someone (or something) else plans to take possession of a person, losing one's mind seems banal.

## Subtle, Layered Effects

In Ravenloft, the lights don't go off all at once. They dim one by one, and with every increasing shade of darkness the victim feels his or her blood growing colder. At least, that's the way it's supposed to feel. Horror is a sensation of dread that slowly builds to an acute, climactic moment of terror. Creating that awful feeling takes time, patience, and layer upon layer of effect.

The key to creating these layers is subtlety. A moment of revulsion is easy to create, but it's not the anxiety and dread that effective horror should evoke. Avoid excessive blood and gore. (Read the "Gothic vs. Modern Horror in an RPG" section in the Introduction.) A few red flecks on a stair can be ominous, whereas a river of plasma is downright disgusting. Where violence is concerned, mere allusion may be enough: a stain of wine on crisp, white linens; the blood-red lips of a sated vampire; a dull, distant sound that suggests a clubbing, though the listener is never quite sure.

Horrors that take shape in someone's mind are far more disturbing than gross descriptions that leave nothing to the imagination. Especially in Gothic-style horror, the author's job is to sow the seeds of terror with suggestion and menace, not with clinical details. After all, the mind grows innured to repeated grisly sights after a time, yet the unknown will terrify it every time. The best Dungeon Masters remember this and actively seek subtlety.

## Plots that Tease

A true master of terror teases the audience bit by bit. He or she doesn't drop a sack of monstrosities on its head and expect that to constitute a plot. He or she takes care not to reveal too much too soon, always providing just enough of a hook to draw the audience (and the victim) further into danger. A ghost appears first as a fleeting vision, as a curtain stirring or an unexplained knock at the bedroom door. The threat is vague, shadowy, and veiled, and the veil may not be lifted completely until the story reaches its climax.

Uncertainty is the wellspring of fear. Mystery, suspense, dread—they all stem from things unknown. The victim in a horror story never knows quite what to expect, but he or she always expects *something* . . . or nearly always, that is.

But just when the tension has mounted until it is almost unbearable—just when the victim can scarcely hold his or her breath any longer—a clever author breaks that tension, just a little. Sometimes humor does the trick. A discordant joke forces the victim to relax and let out a sigh of relief. Or a horrifying red herring leads the victim to a dead end, where his or her guard is foolishly dropped. A false alarm can break the tension, too. For example, the victim wanders through a labyrinth, searching for an exit, knowing that doom may wait around any corner. Suddenly, a black cat leaps out—the false alarm. But the next time, or perhaps the next after that, the danger will be real.

# IX: TECHNIQUES OF TERROR

## Fear in an RPG

Half the fun of reading or watching a tale of horror is being afraid for the main character. Gripping one's chair while the heart pounds and screeching, "No! Don't do that, you fool!" as the character chooses a path to certain doom can be quite enjoyable. The reader is along for the ride, careening recklessly down the track of terror that the author has engineered.

The writer of a scary story is fully in control of the character's actions, making the victim ignore warnings and deny what the reader knows to be true. But when designing or running a role-playing adventure, there's a new twist: The Dungeon Master doesn't control the characters' actions, the players do.

Creating fear in a role-playing adventure presents a challenge that fiction writers don't face: There are players to scare as well as player characters. And the players (unlike characters in a story) won't necessarily become personally involved in every terror the Dungeon Master places before them. The tips below will help put some fear in the hearts of RAVENLOFT adventurers—players and characters alike.

## Fundamental Rules of Thumb

No matter which techniques of terror are employed, keep the following points in mind:

✣ Use it sparingly. At best, anything that becomes too familiar is no longer frightening. At worst, the Dungeon Master risks angering or frustrating the players. *Thou shalt not commit overkill.*

✣ Save the best for last. The rule above doesn't mean "never bring out the big guns"—just exercise a little restraint. Choose the time carefully. Launch particularly nasty techniques (deadly assaults on the body, for example) when the players are over-confident or when the characters have become more than mere pests to the villain.

## Fear vs. Frustration

Virtually every technique of terror in this chapter weakens or limits characters in some way. If the Dungeon Master uses too heavy a hand, the players will begin to see him or her as their nemesis, not the villain. Here's how to avoid that:

✣ Strive to control the *results* of a character's actions, not the action itself. In virtually any AD&D adventure, a good Dungeon Master rarely says, "You can't do that." Instead, he or she says, "Okay, you can try that. Now here's what happens. . . ." Players should never feel that their characters are being run for them.

✣ Never punish the player characters arbitrarily. Every mishap and affliction should have a logical cause that fits the story and the villain's motives. A careful Dungeon Master won't incapacitate (or even handicap) a player character just for the sake of the scare. Ideally, victims will sense that their own choices have caused their suffering—that their own greed, pride, or genuine foolishness has made them vulnerable. ("If I hadn't touched it, my hand wouldn't be paralyzed.") That's more frightening for the victim, less frustrating for the player, and more satisfying for the villain. Evildoers enjoy nothing more than seducing their victims into sealing their own fates.

✣ Let natural troubles plague the player characters whenever possible. An isolated setting, a terrible storm, dense fog—all these hinder a character, and because they occur naturally, they seem less contrived. The players are more likely to accept them—even relish them—as part of a good, plausible horror story. Take advantage of Mother Nature's timeless arsenal: wind, rain, snow, hail, lightning, dust storms, floods, raging rivers, volcanic eruptions, natural fires, and more.

✣ Grant players minor successes. When characters never succeed, their players become frustrated and bored. Although success in Ravenloft will never mean "hack the biggest and baddest monster until it dies," the

Dungeon Master can still provide small rewards to keep the players interested. Let the players win a few minor battles against the villain's minions to offset frustration. Let them at least appear to land a few blows against the major antagonist early in the adventure. (Villains in Ravenloft may even allow this just to help characters build a false sense of security.)

## Hit 'em Where It Hurts

Player characters have powers and advantages their unfortunate counterparts in literature do not. Wizards and priests cast spells, for example, and fighters and thieves can wield enchanted weapons. Some nonhuman races have special abilities such as infravision, and so on.

To put fear in the hearts of such extraordinary victims, the Dungeon Master may have to "get personal." When player characters are over-confident, the Dungeon Master must strive to erode the source of that surety.

Some devices that mildly torment cocky characters are built into Ravenloft from the start. For example, all priests (and paladins) suffer at least a –1 penalty when attempting to turn undead. The penalty rises under further circumstances, such as in the presence of a darklord or in places of extreme defilement. Curses are another powerful and personal punishment. Other assaults are up to the Dungeon Master and, more importantly, the villain.

Antagonists are often well aware of each player character's Achilles' heel (careful Dungeon Masters will be able to justify any such knowledge). If necessary, they will exploit it. The more personal and dangerous a given player character's transgressions against the villain are, the more personal and severe the villain's response tends to be. (Use restraint here, but don't be afraid to "let the punishment fit the crime.") A powerful and annoying player character mage will be less of a problem if he or she stutters. A cleric will have a tough time turning undead when bound and gagged. A fighter will surely agonize over the theft of a precious weapon. And a thief will suffer if his or her hands shake involuntarily as the result of a good scare.

Beware of crippling a character completely, however, for the player will have little to do if his or her character can no longer function. Instead, direct assaults toward the players' favorite approaches to adventuring. For example, when Dirk the Paladin tries to plunge his sword into the vampire's favorite bride, the monster melts the sword. (If chivalry is dead, who better to practice it than the undead?)

## Play Monsters as 'Full-bodied' Characters

. . . not as attack-happy berserkers. Running a Ravenloft creature is not like running an ordinary monster. It's more like playing an important nonplayer character. The Dungeon Master should know and understand that adversary completely—not only its tremendous powers, but also its wants and weaknesses. Remember, a well-developed background makes villains believable. It also helps make them frightening, instead of merely frustrating.

Ravenloft villains are tough—far tougher than any player character. Muscle for muscle and spell for spell, the player characters are almost always outclassed. Fortunately, most Ravenloft villains have one fatal flaw: ego. Most underestimate the prowess of their opponents and take risks to amuse themselves. They could squash the player characters in a moment, but they won't. They want and even need to see their victims tremble. And dead men do not tremble. So the villains toy with and tease their victims because it's their favorite (and perhaps only) entertainment.

Most assaults are more creative than crippling, reflecting perhaps a dark sense of humor. A curse that makes a thief laugh uncontrollably won't render him or her

helpless, but it will make it difficult to slink past "Igor the Henchman" unnoticed. That's how the Dungeon Master maintains the tension required to create fear. The characters should always feel threatened. They should sense that their destruction is not only possible, but likely if they don't "play smart." But they should never feel that no matter what their actions are, they have no hope of survival.

## Isolate Players

Player characters suffer from isolation just like anyone else. The Dungeon Master can certainly trap them alone in a castle, or let a howling beast hunt them down on a lonely moor, or fill a village with people who refuse to help them. But when they are separated from each other, role-playing offers a new twist: The Dungeon Master can separate the players, too.

Players should not see or hear critical details their characters would not. If a wall suddenly divides the party in two, try running each group in a separate room for a while. If a character suddenly finds him or herself sliding down a chute, then ask that player to leave the room. Isolating players helps add atmosphere to the game, but don't do it too often or for too long. Save the technique for critical encounters. After all, the players came to role-play an adventure in Ravenloft, not to explore Dori's beer can collection in the other room.

Here's one example of a good way to treat isolated players: Boris and Ludwig, two intrepid fools, are filing down a dark hall. Without warning, an invisible portal closes, splitting the passage, and they are separated. The Dungeon Master sequesters their players, too. Neither character can see the other, but they can still hear each other—or so it seems. Boris hears Ludwig calling for help (according to the Dungeon Master), and Boris's player must declare his character's action. Ludwig, meanwhile, hears his own voice too, but

obviously knows it wasn't himself talking—a phantom is mimicking his voice! Worse yet, the instructions that voice is giving will put Boris in peril. Desperately Ludwig tries to make himself heard. Even if he succeeds, who will Boris believe? The phantom voice? Or Ludwig's? Or perhaps neither?

## Pass Notes

It's not always necessary to take a player aside to pass on privileged information. Sometimes it's more effective to pass a note. For example, a character is experiencing changes that mimic the transformation into a werewolf. (Maybe he or she's really changing, and maybe not. The villain could just be playing deadly games.)

During play, the Dungeon Master nonchalantly passes to the player a note that states, "Your palms begin to itch" or "Your fingers seem to have grown unnaturally long." Then the Dungeon Master takes back the note so other players won't see it. Of course the other players will want to know what the note says, and they'll become suspicious of their companion if he or she answers "nothing" or makes up a silly response. (For effect, the Dungeon Master might pass blank notes from time to time, which keeps everyone guessing.)

Done well, note-passing facilitates a tried and true maneuver: *divide and conquer.* When characters mistrust one another, they begin to lose sight of the real threat—the villain. That makes characters more vulnerable, and it makes the antagonist quite content.

## Add Atmosphere to the Game Room

It's hard to create a spooky mood in broad daylight. It's also tough to scare a player when the person next to him or her is crunching a pretzel or slurping a beverage. To counter such distractions, add a little atmosphere to the game room. That certainly doesn't mean wearing a shroud, dribbling fake blood from the mouth, or playing in the attic among the cobwebs.

But go ahead and dim the lights a little. Play spooky background music. Use simple sound effects. (If a ghost raps on the door, rap on the table.) Do the things a good storyteller would do with an eager audience gathered around a fire to hear ghost stories. Just keep it simple, and remember it's all for fun.

## Undermine Player Confidence

An occasional "mysterious new game procedure" can disconcert the players in a delightful way. Ideally, the players will know nothing about the rules in this book and little to nothing about the adventure. That doesn't happen too often, though. After a few games and a few peeks at the rules, players begin to think they know what the Dungeon Master has up his or her sleeve at any given time. So fake an occasional "surprise" rule that makes players question what's happening behind the scenes.

Here are a few examples (but, of course, the fact that they appear here may compromise their effectiveness:

- As the characters stroll through the woods, roll dice for no apparent reason and make a note of the "result." Players will wonder what horrors are being concealing from them.
- Take away the character sheets and assess a few damage points. Before returning them, write a cryptic note to one or two players about what they have experienced. Or do nothing at all with the sheets, which can leave the players wondering to the point of mania.
- Roll dice for the players at times when they have *always* rolled for themselves in the past.
- Be creative, be dramatic, but don't go overboard. These maneuvers should be that rare little "extra" that supports another technique of terror. If any gimmick is overused, it becomes ineffective.

# X: VAN RICHTEN'S OVERVIEW

*Remember: The fight against creatures of darkness is a difficult and often painful one! But it is a good fight, and one that must be fought. If this work inspires but one person to follow in my footsteps, then I have succeeded and my life's work has not been for naught.*

—From *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires*

There are few nonlords of Ravenloft who have achieved the notoriety of Dr. Rudolph van Richten. There are even fewer who have seen what he has and lived to write about it. This erstwhile herbalist physician from Rivalis, Darkon, is described in Chapter III of *Domains and Denizens*, but it is his series of guides to the monsters of Ravenloft that most know and remember best.

As of this writing, Dr. van Richten has completed six treatises, concerning vampires (TSR, Inc. product stock number 9345), ghosts (9355), liches (9412), werebeasts (9416), golems ("the created"—9417), and mummies ("ancient dead"—9451), respectively. His literary proliferation is astounding to even the most brilliant of sages, and he has not hung up his cloak and backpack yet, despite the pain and suffering he has endured through the years. It would be impossible to summarize his work in an entire book of even this size, but his most basic observations regarding the habits of these monsters in Ravenloft are worth reviewing.

None of the creatures described below are unique to the Demiplane of Dread, yet all of them have been changed and empowered by the Mists, so they are not to be treated and disposed of as they would in any other campaign setting. Those Dungeon Masters who would learn details such as background, common habits, uncommon abilities, and even the psychology of the beasts should consult the appropriate resources. What follows here is only a basic rules summary that will provide Dungeon Masters with enough information to generate a monster specific to the Demiplane of Dread. In fact, only the common powers of each creature have been included—listing all of their usual vulnerabilities, let alone the rest of their qualities, would require a great deal of space. For quick reference of other monster traits, Dungeon Masters can consult the *Monstrous Manual* and the various RAVENLOFT appendices of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, at least until they have a chance to garner the full wisdom and knowledge of Dr. van Richten.

## Vampires

Vampires are divided into age categories. Essentially, a vampire's power grows as it ages—the creature gains new abilities that it did not previously have and becomes less susceptible. In short, the older a vampire becomes, the more formidable a foe it becomes. Each age category has a title associated with it (ages refer to the number of years the creature has been a vampire):

| Title | Age (in Years) |
|---|---|
| Fledgling | 0–99 |
| Mature | 100–199 |
| Old | 200–299 |
| Very old | 300–399 |
| Ancient | 400–499 |
| Eminent | 500–999 |
| Patriarch | 1,000 or more |

These titles are more of an academic interest than any practical value, as one would not normally refer to vampires by any of the above titles. For example, Strahd von Zarovich falls into the "ancient" category, but one who calls him "Ancient Strahd," rather than "Lord Strahd," will not live long to rue to the error.

✣ Powers by Age Subtable ✣

| Age Category | Fledgling | Mature | Old | Very Old | Ancient | Eminent | Patriarch |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hit Dice* | 8+3 | 9+3 | 10+2 | 11+1 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| Str** | 18/76 | 19/91 | 18/00 | 18/00 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| Int** | 16 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| Dex** | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| Cha** | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 |
| Movement† | 12 | 15 | 15 | 18 | 18 | 21 | 24 |
| Save vs. charm†† | –2 | –2 | –3 | –3 | –4 (voice) | –4 (voice) | –5 (will) |
| Weapon needed to hit | +1 | +1 | +2 | +2 | +3 | +3 | +4 |
| Regenerated hp/round | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Magic resistance | nil | 5% | 10% | 15% | 20% | 25% | 30% |
| Rnds of sunlight withstood‡ | 0 | 1 | 5 | 10 | 3 turns | 1 hour | immune |
| Immunity‡‡ | — | garlic | mirrors | — | holy symbols | running water | sunlight |

* Vampires with 10 HD are turned as ghosts; those with 11+ HD are turned as liches.

** These values are minima. If the vampire had greater ability scores prior to becoming undead, the higher scores are retained.Vampires, regardless of age, have a Constitution score of at least 18.

† Vampires fly (in bat form) at a rate of 18(C).

†† When vampires charm with their voices, the listener does not suffer the negative penalty to his or her saving throw.

‡ Despite any resistance or immunity to sunlight, the vampire still loathes it and will seek shade or take cover if possible.

‡‡ These are cumulative with age; vampires immune to holy symbols are NOT immune to being turned.

## Powers

Vampires enjoy a number of spell-like and nonspell-like powers, most of which are summarized on the subtable above. Their other powers are presented and described below:

**Animal control:** Vampires have the natural ability to summon and control animals, and the following subtable summarizes the response to a vampire's endeavor. Note that the Dungeon Master will have to determine how far off the summoned creatures are and how long it takes them to arrive before joining the vampire.

| Type | Number | Duration |
|---|---|---|
| Bats | 1d100 | 2d6 rounds |
| Rats | 1d100 | 1d10 rounds |
| Wolves | 3d6 | 2d4 rounds* |
| Worg wolves** | 3d6 | 2d4 rounds* |

* Remain in the area, free-willed, when this period expires.

** Can be summoned only by a lord of the land.

A summoned swarm of bats covers an area roughly 20 feet in radius. Those caught within the swarm are blinded, suffer a –4 penalty to all attack rolls and Armor Class, and have their movement rates cut in half.

**Controlling undead:** Vampires are able to control other undead of lesser Hit Die values. The master is able to control a combined HD total of creatures equal to as much as half its own Hit Dice. Intelligent undead are entitled to a saving throw vs. paralysis to avoid control.

**Energy drain:** As on other worlds, vampires in Ravenloft drain two energy (experience) levels with a touch, due to their connection with the Negative Energy Plane. This attack must be delivered through a direct touch, but bare-handed attacks may add physical (hit point) damage in addition to the energy drain.

**Shapechanging:** Vampires can assume the form of gaseous vapors, a wolf, or a bat at will, though some of these monsters achieve other shapes as well. While changing, the monster suffers a +4 penalty to its Armor Class and a –1 penalty to all saving throws.

In gaseous form, the creature's movement rate is 3 less than normal. It is all but immune to attack and can escape virtually any surroundings in this form. A *gust of wind* spell or similar condition can scatter the vampire, but not destroy it. This form is also the one a vampire takes when reduced to 0 hit points. It must then flee to its sanctuary and rest for 24 hours, when it can rise again at full strength.

The stats for wolf and bat forms are as follows (all statistics not specified are per the vampire):

*Wolf form:* Dmg 3d12; AC 2; MV 18; SZ L; ML 16.

*Bat form:* Dmg 2d6; AC 2; MV 0, Fl 18(C); SD –3 to opponent's attack rolls; SZ M; ML 16.

**Spider climb:** All vampires have the innate ability to climb walls at will, with no duration or frequency limits.

**Salient abilities:** There are any number of special powers that rare vampires possess. These range from spell-like powers to insatiable blood lust. See *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires* (9345) for full details.

## Ghosts

These ethereal creatures are classified in *magnitudes of power*, determined by the way in which they became ghosts, which affects their potency. In general, magnitude is determined by the emotional state of the monster at the moment of its creation. A brief description of each magnitude follows.

**First magnitude:** These are the least powerful and most common form of ghosts, created when there is just enough emotional energy to empower the transformation.

**Second magnitude:** Ghosts of the second magnitude are more powerful than their lesser kindred, but they are generally little more than a nuisance. They are more aggressive and more easily angered than those of the first magnitude. These types are created in a fairly charged state of emotion.

**Third magnitude:** Such monsters are genuinely dangerous, for they are resistant to some weapons and spells. Often they can cripple and kill with ease. They are created when someone dies in a highly charged state of emotion.

**Fourth magnitude:** Among the most powerful of apparitions, ghosts of the fourth magnitude are created only through scenes of death that involve great emotional stress or energy. Spirits of this type are generally warped by their experience, becoming highly aggressive, evil, and cruel. They are almost impossible to drive off through conventional means, requiring special care on the part of those who would put them to rest.

**Fifth magnitude:** These beings almost certainly cannot be destroyed through any conventional means. Their immunity to many weapons renders them extremely dangerous. The emotional intensity required to create a ghost of this power is so great that it happens only very rarely.

## Powers

There are some qualities that seem to be present in all ghosts, although each of them is

affected by the magnitude of the monster. These abilities are briefly summarized below.

**Immunity to magic** As one might guess, ghosts remain unaffected by spells and magical items that affect biological processes. The wizard spells that fall into this category are *avoidance* (*attraction*), *blindness*, *cloudkill*, *contagion*, *deafness*, *death*, *death fog*, *energy drain*, *finger of death*, *haste*, *hold animal*, *hold monster*, *hold person*, *irritation*, *magic jar*, *Otto's irresistible dance*, *polymorph any object*, *polymorph other*, *power word blind*, *power word kill*, *power word stun*, *sink*, *sleep*, *slow*, and *vampiric touch*. The priest spells useless against ghosts are *animal growth* (*shrink animal*), *cause blindness*, *cause deafness*, *cause disease*, *hold animal*, *hold person*, *regenerate* (*wither*), *restoration* (*energy drain*), and *speak with monsters*.

**Insubstantiality:** All ghost are, or can become at will, physically without form. As such, they are untouched by nonmagical weapons, and more powerful spirits may be immune to some magical weapons, too. This subtable defines this power in game terms.

| Ghost's Magnitude | Armor Class* | Plus to Hit** |
|---|---|---|
| First | 0/8 | +1/0 |
| Second | –1/6 | +1/0 |
| Third | –2/4 | +2/+1 |
| Fourth | –3/2 | +3/+1 |
| Fifth | –5/0 | +4/+2 |

* The first number is the ghost's AC when ethereal and attacked by nonethereal foes. The second number is its AC when it is corporeal or its foe is also ethereal.

** The first number represents the minimum plus a weapon must have in order to harm a ghost when ethereal and attacked by nonethereal foes. The second number represents the enchantment needed when the ghost is corporeal or its foe is also ethereal.

**Invisibility:** A ghost may step into the Border Ethereal at any time, where it becomes

invisible. A *detect invisibility* spell is the most common means by which such a creature may be revealed, but any magic that exposes things unseen may be employed. Note that ghosts must at least become visible in order to attack those outside the Ethereal Plane.

**Rejuvenation:** Ghosts are able to "rejuvenate" themselves by drawing upon the essence of the Ethereal Plane. This power differs from regeneration because the ghost must "rest" after doing so before it can attack or defend itself again. The amount of rest time varies from specimen to specimen, but first-magnitude ghosts generally need to rest for an hour while fifth-magnitude ghost require as little as 10 minutes.

Of course, there are myriad extraordinary powers of ghosts, including the abilities to accelerate aging; cause despair, fear, paralysis, revulsion, and wounds; charm animals and persons; command undead; create illusions; dominate victims; drain abilities, energy, and memories; entrance victims; and many more. See *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts* (9355) for all that information and other facts about ghosts in Ravenloft.

## Liches

There are few monsters more evil than undead wizards, who have sacrificed their humanity for ever-increasing power. *Van Richten's Guide to the Lich* (9412) contains (among other things) a great deal of information concerning lich-altered spells and new ones created specially for those creatures. Included are descriptions of new minions to serve them—the quasimancer, vassalich, and the lich familiar—as well as Dr. van Richten's usual tips for understanding and hunting those monsters.

## Powers

There is a great deal more to the lich than ultrapowerful wizardry, but some of their more common abilities are outlined below.

**Black aura:** Any creature of fewer than 5 Hit Dice (or levels of experience) who looks upon a lich must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell or flee in terror for 5d4 rounds. The effect tends to descend upon the victim rather than strike him or her suddenly (as would the effect of a *fear* spell), so the chance to drop items is left to the Dungeon Master.

The viewer must see the lich in its true form in order for the black aura to manifest; a lich disguised with an illusion would not evoke fear unless the disguise was a frightening one.

**Cold darkness:** Merely an emanation of chilling blackness, this quality of the lich is purely a dramatic one and should be so used for the Dungeon Master's convenience. As such, the area of effect may shift freely to prevent players from using the aura as a homing device or other source of information. However, some Dungeon Masters may wish to treat the aura as quasimagical—creating a modified version of the *blur* spell, for example. Other vision- and temperature-oriented spells may be similarly employed.

**Chilling touch:** Should a lich touch a living creature, he or she immediately suffers 1d10 points of cold damage. The victim then must roll a successful saving throw vs. paralysis or be suddenly and completely unable to move. The paralysis lasts until magically dispelled.

**Control over undead:** A lich is able to control any form of undead with half (round up) or less of the lich's Hit Dice. For example, a newly formed lich has at least 11 Hit Dice, so it has immediate potential dominion over wraiths and lesser undead. To assume control, the undead creature must simply be within the lich's range of influence, which is equal to the lich's Hit Dice times 1,000 feet. In other words, a typical lich is able to command undead more than 2 miles away!

Once an undead creature is within the lich's range, it asserts control by conducting a mystical attack, during which it mentally imposes its will upon the target(s). This attack automatically succeeds against undead that have (or

had in life) 3 or fewer Hit Dice. Those with more than 3 HD are allowed a saving throw vs. spell to avoid being controlled. However, the lich is free to impose its will repeatedly in subsequent rounds upon those undead that have made a successful save, until they succumb to its influence or escape its range.

The lich can control a number of minions that have total Hit Dice equal to three times its Intelligence score. There is no limit to how many of any kind of undead that the lich can control, only the number of possible minions.

The lich is able to see through the eyes of a controlled minion, even if the organs have rotted or otherwise been lost to the creature. The master can also listen through its servants' ears, but only if they are reasonably intact.

It is possible for a minion to be controlled outside the lich's range. Once per 24 hours, the lich can command a servant to perform a task, placing the servant under an effect similar to a *geas* spell. The minion then performs that action no matter how long it takes or how great a distance it must travel to reach the goal.

The task assigned to an unintelligent minion must be simple, not containing any more than four steps. An example might be: "Go west until you find a castle; kill the red-haired guard at the drawbridge gate; take his gold amulet; return here." More intelligent undead can understand and act upon more complex orders, of course. Such creatures can even be ordered to take command of a lich's legions on the front line of a battlefield or to lead a reconnaissance team on a mission.

The minion, whatever its level of intelligence, will never waver in its pursuit of the quest. The lich's quested minion can still be turned, but doing so only has the effect of making it stand still. When no longer the subject of the turning, it continues along its way. The minion ignores all distractions during the quest, but instinctively avoids villages, campsites, fire, and other creatures. It attempts to overcome any obstacle with whatever capacity for thought it possesses. If it is unable to complete the mission for any reason, the slave returns to the lich and communicates its difficulties telepathically, if possible.

**Lich sight:** A lich can see with normal vision in even the darkest of environments; furthermore, it remains unaffected by even the brightest light.

**Retained abilities:** The Dungeon Master should assign nonweapon proficiencies appropriate to the campaign, but he or she should keep in mind that a lich which has been in existence for more than a few years has had plenty of time to develop an assortment of near-perfect skills. It would be reasonable to award the creature all weapon proficiencies allowable to its former class, and even to allow it some proficiencies that are not normally used by members of its former class. After all, the lich has virtually an eternity to study any skill it wishes to acquire.

**Spells and spellcasting:** Liches do not require uninterrupted rest or study time in order to learn spells. The amount of time required to memorize a full complement of lich spells is equal to the number of available spell levels times 10 rounds. For example, if a lich wishes to memorize one 1st-level spell, one 3rd-level spell, one 4th-level spell, and two 5th-level spells, it would require 180 rounds (18 [spell levels] × 10 = 180), or three hours. If the lich is interrupted after the first hour, but casts no spells, then it only need meditate for two more hours to complete its task.

These creatures perform in all respects as a specialist wizard of the necromantic school, with the following exceptions: They suffer no penalties when learning spells from other schools, and they are not prohibited from learning spells from the opposite schools (illusion and enchantment/charm). To the contrary, liches are quite adept at casting magic from both opposing schools.

**Weapon and magical immunities:** Liches can be hit only by weapons of at least +1 enchantment or by creatures with at least 6 Hit Dice. In addition, the magical and undead

nature of the lich renders it immune to *charm*, *cold*, *death*, *electricity*, *enfeeblement*, *insanity*, *polymorph*, and *sleep* spells.

Priests must be at least 9th level (and paladins must be at least 11th level) in order to attempt to turn a lich.

## Lycanthropes

To a great extent, *Van Richten's Guide to Werebeasts* (9416) concerns itself with the psychology of these creatures, who either walk secretly among men and women (if they are naturally born lycanthropes) or who don't even realize what they are (if they are infected). Much attention is also paid to the discovery and pursuit of these creatures, for they can be quite ingenious in their methods of avoiding detection by would-be hunters. Dungeon Masters and player characters who wish to benefit from Dr. van Richten's scientific approach to lycanthropes would do well to consult that resource.

In the meantime, some important distinctions can be drawn between lycanthropes of other worlds and those that are born or infected specifically in Ravenloft. First, werebeasts of other realms are either infected with the disease, born with it, or cursed with it, but those in the land of the Mists can also contract it through a dark pact, one similar to that which turned Strahd von Zarovich into a vampire. Second, a true lycanthrope in Ravenloft can enslave its victims, creating a pack of willing (and unwilling) servants. When the infected lycanthropes change to animal form, the true werebeast may control their actions. In the deadliest cases, a true lycanthrope also may have the power to trigger its infected victims' shapechange.

Other features of werebeasts in Ravenloft are detailed below.

**Avoidance and cure:** The victim of a prime-material lycanthrope has various options by which he or she might avoid the affliction. As described in the *Monstrous Manual*, if the victim eats belladonna within an hour of the attack, there's a 25% chance that doing so will cure the affliction (or, more precisely, stop it from occurring in the first place).

This possibility of reprieve isn't available to victims of Ravenloft werebeasts. Such unfortunates in the land of the Mists can certainly eat belladonna (and suffer the 1d4 days of incapacitation that the poison inflicts), but there's exactly *zero* chance that it will prevent the onset of lycanthropy, should the die roll indicate infection (2% per point of damage suffered, as opposed to 1% anywhere else). The player characters don't have to realize this, of course.

In addition, curing lycanthropy is considerably easier outside Ravenloft. Beyond the Demiplane of Dread, all that's required is the casting of a *remove curse* spell on the night of a full moon (or on the night preceding or following a full moon). If the infected character makes a successful saving throw vs. polymorph, the curse is broken.

Not so within Ravenloft. No cure is possible until the true lycanthrope who began the chain of infection is slain. Since a diseased lycanthrope can infect other humans, who in turn can infect still others, the source of the disease may be extremely difficult to trace.

Once the master lycanthrope is dead, the victim must complete a series of arduous steps to cure the disease. First, he or she must perform a ritual of piety to cleanse the spirit. Next, the creature must assume its bestial form. (In other words, the form must be triggered. Usually, that means waiting for a full moon.) A priest must then cast three spells upon the beast: *atonement*, *cure disease*, and *remove curse*.

As the contagion is stripped from the victim's body, the victim makes a saving throw. As mentioned, in other realms a diseased lycanthrope must make a successful saving throw vs. polymorph to complete the cure. In Ravenloft, however, he or she must make a successful saving throw vs. *death*.

A save vs. death is appropriate because the final step of this cure causes excruciating pain. Withstanding that pain requires exceptional fortitude and strength of will. But another, more serious reason for the different saving throw exists. Ravenloft allows most victims only a *single chance* to escape the bonds of lycanthropy. In virtually every case, the victim will be a lycanthrope for life if this save is failed. Usually, the priest and other attendants mercifully kill the beast on the spot. The victim, in peaceful death, regains human form. Only when the powers of Ravenloft intervene is this execution stayed. (As an optional rule, the Dungeon Master might assume this is always true of player characters.) On these rare occasions, the victim may be allowed a second chance to effect a cure. Or he or she may be miraculously freed of the disease—at least for a while. . . .

**Triggers:** The lycanthropic contagion lies dormant until something triggers a transformation. Then the cells of the serum multiply wildly and force the victim's shape change. For common werewolves, a full moon triggers the change—on the night of a full moon, and each night immediately preceding and following it, the victim changes into a wolf. Other werebeasts may change only when they become angry or fall into a battle lust. In Ravenloft, even two creatures of a similar nature may be transformed by different events. (Members of a single pack, however, usually share the same trigger.) Some common triggers are a particular phase of the moon (traditionally, the full phase); the coming of day or night; exposure to a particular type of plant, animal, or mineral; extreme fear; sleep; a particular sound or music; intense passion; the sight of blood; and physical pain.

**Likely victims:** Infected lycanthropes in Ravenloft are much more likely to choose friends or loved ones as their victims. Outside the demiplane, werebeasts generally target

either personal friends or enemies, making no distinction between the two. (As stated in the *Monstrous Manual*, all that matters is the strength of the love—or hate—binding werebeast and victim.) Such is the dark, horrifying nature of Ravenloft, that friends, family, and lovers are the first to suffer.

## Golems

There is much potential for wonderful adventures surrounding the actual making of a golem and the lunatic who engages in the exploit, not just in the pursuit and destruction of one. *Van Richten's Guide to the Created* (9417) discusses both subjects in detail. Here, the basic rules are covered below.

**Basic statistics:** Although there is no such thing as an "average" golem, the numbers below reflect a golem's base ability scores.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Strength** | 19 |
| **Dexterity** | 18 |
| **Constitution** | 20 |
| **Intelligence** | 9–19 |
| **Wisdom** | 2 |
| **Charisma** | 6 |
| **Movement** | 12 |
| **Armor Class** | 6 |
| **Hit Dice** | 9 |
| **THAC0** | 11 |
| **Number of Attacks** | 2 |
| **Damage** | 2d8/2d8 |

**Strength modifiers:** The size of a golem affects its basic attribute score, as noted below.

| Size Category | Strength Modifier |
|---|---|
| Huge (12′ or more) | +2 |
| Large (7–12′) | +1 |
| Medium (4–7′) | 0 |
| Small (2–4′) | –1 |
| Tiny (under 2′) | –2 |

Extraordinary Strength can inflict more damage, too, as noted below.

| Strength | Damage |
|---|---|
| 20 | 2d8 + 1 |
| 21 | 2d8 + 2 |
| 22 | 2d8 + 3 |
| 23 | 3d8 |
| 24 | 3d8 + 1 |
| 25 | 3d8 + 2 |

**Dexterity and Constitution modifiers:** Dexterity can be greatly enhanced or decreased, depending upon the degree of care in the construction and the materials used. (Flesh is the most common, but bone, clay, glass, metal, stone, straw, and wood are sometimes employed as well.) The Dungeon Master must determine the exact attribute score, but all rules in the *Player's Handbook* apply to the final result. Constitution can be affected in the same manner as Dexterity, and the *Player's Handbook* should be consulted for any other adjustments that would occur as the result of a modified score.

**Intelligence:** A flesh golem's Intelligence score is determined by the type of brain used. As a general rule, the score is at least one rank lower than that of the original owner. For example, a golem with the brain of a wereraven (genius) would be rated as "exceptionally intelligent" (15–16), while a golem with the brain of a normal human would have a "low" Intelligence (5–7).

Of course, golems built from materials other than flesh are most often nonintelligent, following the standard set in the *Monstrous Manual*; they have no brain upon which intelligence can be measured. This is particularly true of those monsters created though conventional magic. However, any golem born of obsession (see *Van Richten's Guide to the Created*) and given life by the mysterious powers of Ravenloft could exhibit both great intelligence and a distinct personality.

## Powers

**Resistance to toxins:** All golems are utterly immune to poison and cannot be harmed by

any toxin. Furthermore, they are completely immune to disease, including magical maladies.

**Telepathy:** A flesh golem of Ravenloft maintains a unique telepathic bond with its creator. At will, the creature can see through the creator's eyes. This ability, coupled with an uncanny capacity to know in which direction the creator lies, enables golems to track their makers with a skill no bloodhound could equal. The golem's telepathy is so invasive that the monster, in effect, knows its maker better than he or she knows him or herself. The creator can keep no desires, fears, dreams, or feelings from the golem. (In this sense, the ability resembles the psionic power of empathy, with no limit to range.) The golem's telepathic ability also enables it to "speak" into the creator's mind at will, regardless of range.

This power lies solely with the golem. In other words, the creator cannot sense the thoughts or emotions of the golem. Nor can the creator intentionally send messages to the golem. This bond can be broken only if the creator is shielded by powerful magic. Even when the creator is so shielded, the telepathic "voice" of the golem can still reach him or her, though the golem may lose other benefits of the bond.

**Weapon and spell immunities:** A flesh golem in Ravenloft can be struck by weapons of +1 or better enchantment. Golems are vulnerable to magical spells, except mind- or life-affecting spells such as *charm*, *hold*, *finger of death*, or *sleep*. Further, it can be struck by creatures that have at least 4 + 1 Hit Dice (player characters do not qualify).

All golems created in Ravenloft receive a +4 bonus to saving throws vs. physical damage, including spell effects. They are partially immune to cold and electricity, which inflict half damage normally and none at all if the monster makes a successful saving throw.

Fire and acid inflict full damage to flesh golems (1d8 + 2 points of damage per normal flask). A normal weapon that has been heated until it is red-hot can also be used against flesh golems. The weapon must be at least as large as a short sword; otherwise, it softens and becomes ineffective. Further, the weapon must make a saving throw vs. magical fire each time it is heated, and one vs. crushing blow each time it delivers a blow. Failure to save in either case indicates that the weapon has become too warped or blunted to use. Note that a heated weapon remains hot for two rounds maximum.

**Zeitgebers:** Golems are extremely dangerous foes, and providing an Achilles' heel in the form of a *zeitgeber*, or triggered behavior, can give clever player characters an interesting weakness to exploit. The list of potential triggers is endless, but a zeitgeber should reflect some peculiarity of the monster's creator or the monster itself.

For example, imagine a golem's creator is a musician obsessed with the notion of composing and producing the perfect opera. He creates a golem so that he might have the ideal tenor for the starring role. However, when the monster hears the strains of organ music, it begins to howl uncontrollably in a parody of the aria. For possible game effects, the golem might suffer a –2 penalty to its attack rolls while singing, or it might not be able to attack at all. Other possible effects of a zeitgeber might be debilitating pain; fear (as the spell) for 1d6 rounds; causing the golem to come running; inability of the golem to attack the person producing the zeitgeber; and causing the golem to perform some involuntary action such as dancing.

## Mummies

The reasons why and methods by which ancient dead arise and walk the land are many and varied. As always, Dr. van Richten provides the most authoritative commentary available on such subjects as the mummy's biology (or "necrology," as van Richten calls it), the numerous types of the creature, common and unique abilities, common and unique vulnerabilities, triggers that arouse them, and much more. The Dungeon

Master is encouraged to consult the source book, *Van Richten's Guide to Ancient Dead* (9451), to fully comprehend these monsters.

Mummies are classified in terms of *power ranks*. They are summarized below.

**First rank:** Ancient dead of the first rank are created with little or no pomp and circumstance; their origins are often spontaneous. Although they possess an array of potentially dangerous powers, they are not particularly formidable. A mummy of the first rank usually can be annulled simply by destroying its physical form; this is seldom a daunting task for experienced hunters.

Mummies of this rank typically have 1 to 3 Hit Dice and a movement rating of 6 to 9; their Armor Class ranges from 7 to 5; and they suffer full damage from silver, enchanted, and special (not enchanted, but made of materials specifically caustic to the individual) weapons.

**Second rank:** Ancient dead of the second rank are generally only slightly more dangerous than their lesser kindred. In many cases, a mummy of the second rank arises spontaneously if the circumstances surrounding its death are sufficiently charged with emotion. In most other cases, mummies of this rank are created by evil spellcasters or by other undead. Consequentially, they usually function as servants for more powerful beings, and defeating them is often but a single step toward a desired victory.

Mummies of the second rank commonly have 4 to 6 Hit Dice, have a movement rate of 6 to 9, maintain an Armor Class of 5 to 3, and must be attacked by weapons of at least +1 enchantment. These mummies suffer only half damage from silver or special weapons, and take full damage from enchanted weapons.

**Third rank:** Ancient dead of the third rank are powerful enough to pose a threat to even the best-equipped adventurers. Unless one is fortunate and discovers a weakness quickly, destroying these creatures requires great force or meticulous detective work or both.

These creatures typically have 7 to 9 Hit Dice, move at a rate of 9 to 12, and enjoy an Armor Class of 3 to 0. They take no damage from nonmagical weapons of any sort, and magical ones inflict half their base damage (round down), plus their full magical bonus. For this purpose, "base damage" includes damage from the weapon and all nonmagical bonuses from Strength and specialization.

**Fourth rank:** Ancient dead of this rank are truly formidable. Most conventional methods serve only to delay or drive off these creatures; mummies of this rank may seem to be defeated only to reappear and menace their opponents once again. (The game module *The Awakening* [9452] features one such creature.)

Ancient dead creatures of this rank arise only after an arcane ritual and interment in an elaborate tomb. Usually, the deceased took an active role in planning his or her funeral rites and burial. Often, the deceased fully intends to return to the mortal world as a mummy. Many of these powerful individuals believe that death has no sway over them; others actively embrace death in an attempt to seize greater power or to gain control over the afterlife.

Mummies of this rank commonly have 10 to 12 Hit Dice, move at a rate of 9 to 12, and have an Armor Class of 0 to –2. They can only be attacked by weapons of no less than +2 enchantment, and they suffer only half damage from *any* weapon that can harm them (roll damage, add all bonuses, and divide by two; round fractions up).

**Fifth rank:** Ancient dead of this rank are all but unstoppable. Their powers are vast, their minds diabolical, and their weaknesses few. The wealth and labor of an entire nation are required to invest a mummy of this level.

These creatures have 13 or more Hit Dice, move at a rate of 12 to 15, and have an Armor Class of –2 to –4. Weapons of +3 or better enchantment are required to hit them. Further, mummies with fifth-rank invulnerability suffer only damage from a weapon's bonus—a *dagger +3* and a *two-handed sword +3* would both inflict a mere 3 points of damage upon a

mummy of the fifth rank. Bonus damage for Strength and specialization is not applied.

## Powers

**Disease:** Diseases inflicted by the ancient dead come in a variety of unpleasant forms. The most common of these is mummy rot, whose effects are summarized below.

| Rank | Fatality* |
|---|---|
| First | 1d6 months |
| Second | 1d12 weeks |
| Third | 1d8 days |
| Fourth | 1d6 days |
| Fifth | 1d3 days |

* This is the usual amount of time before the victim dies from the disease. This number can vary greatly. Nonmagical cures are 100% ineffective against mummy rot. Only a *cure disease* spell or similar magic is effective.

Mummy rot of the first rank permanently reduces the victim's Charisma score by 2 points for each month the disease goes untreated. While afflicted, the victim gains no benefits from the various *cure wounds* spells, although a *regenerate* spell can restore lost hit points (it has no effect on the disease, however). The victim can recover lost hit points through rest, but at 10% of the normal rate—1 hit point per 10 days of light activity or 3 hit points per 10 days of complete rest. Nonmagical interventions such as care from a character who has the healing and herbalism proficiencies are ineffective.

Mummy rot of the second rank permanently reduces the victim's Charisma score by 1 point for each week the disease goes untreated; magical healing and natural hit point recovery are affected as above.

Mummy rot of the third or higher rank permanently reduces the victim's Strength and Constitution scores by 1 point each day and permanently reduces Charisma by 2 points each

day. While afflicted, the victim cannot recover lost hit points by any means except a *wish*. After 1d6 hours, the victim is racked by convulsions, which cause a –2 penalty to all ability checks and make spellcasting and memorization impossible. This type of mummy rot can be cured only by a combination of *cure disease* and *regeneration* spells; a *cure disease* spell cast on its own relieves all symptoms, but the victim suffers a relapse 24 hours later if a *regeneration* spell is not also administered during that time.

Victims who die while afflicted with any form of mummy rot decay rapidly unless embalmed quickly; the victim cannot be raised from death unless a *cure disease* and a *raise dead* or *resurrection* is cast within one hour. If either of the latter two spells are unsuccessful (the character fails the resurrection survival roll), then the victim becomes an undead creature.

**Energy and elemental attacks:** All mummies are immune to at least one form of energy attack, usually to cold, but many of them are resistant to other energy forms. If a mummy is *resistant* to an element or form of energy, nonmagical attacks inflict no damage and magical attacks have the normal affect. If the mummy is *immune* to an element or form energy, it takes no damage from any attack based on that form. This includes non-magical attacks, spells, and attacks from elementals. The Dungeon Master is free to assign a different immunity in keeping with a mummy's physical origins. For example, the waterlogged tissues of a mummy preserved in a salt marsh might be impervious to fire.

Additionally, mummies of at least the third rank are *resistant* to a second form of energy. Those of at least the fourth rank are *immune* to two forms of energy. Mummies of the fifth rank might be *immune* to two forms of energy and *resistant* to a third form of energy.

**Fear:** A mummy's *fear* aura usually takes effect on sight, and applies only at the beginning of each encounter with a mummy. Unlike normal Ravenloft fear checks, mummy-inspired fear is a direct assault on the victim's will. Each victim viewing the mummy must save vs. spell or become paralyzed with fright for a variable number of rounds, as shown on the table below. If a character views a mummy under circumstances that would normally cause a fear check, there is a –1 penalty to the save vs. spell. Mummies that have powerful fear auras cause additional penalties to the save. Numbers, however, can bolster the victims' courage; for every six people in a group, the saving throw improves by +1. All humans get a +2 to the save, and Wisdom bonuses apply to the save as well.

| Rank | Modifier* | Duration** |
|---|---|---|
| First | 0 | 1d4 rounds |
| Second | –1 | 1d6 rounds |
| Third | –2 | 1d8 rounds |
| Fourth | –3 | 1d10 rounds |
| Fifth | –4 | 1d12 rounds |

* This is the penalty to the save vs. spell. This number can vary by 1 or 2 points in either direction.

** This is the length of time victims who fail their saves remain paralyzed with fright.

**Infravision:** All mummies can see in the dark and usually have infravision with a 30-foot range. Mummies that have retained demihuman abilities have better infravision.

**Enhanced strength:** Mummies are supernaturally strong. Mummies that have retained warrior abilities or high racial strength scores may be stronger, as noted in the subtable below.

| Rank | Score* | Melee Damage** |
|---|---|---|
| First | 18/76 | 1d8 |
| Second | 18/91 | 1d12 |
| Third | 18/00 | 2d8 |
| Fourth | 19 | 3d6 |
| Fifth | 20 | 3d8 |

* The mummy's effective Strength ability score.

** The amount of damage a humanoid mummy can inflict with one unarmed physical attack.

**Rejuvenation:** Like ghosts, mummies are capable of rejuvenating, and they must rest before engaging in strenuous activities after doing so. The following subtable summarizes the ability.

| Rank* | Rate** | Rest† |
|---|---|---|
| First | 5/day | 1 week/1 day |
| Second | 6/hour | 1 day/1 day |
| Third | 12/hour | 1 day/1 hour |
| Fourth | 1/minute | 1 hour/1 hour |
| Fifth | 2/minute | 1 hour/none |

* Mummies with first- or second-rank rejuvenation usually cannot recover if their hit points have been reduced to 0 or fewer; these mummies are destroyed when defeated in combat. Mummies that have third-rank rejuvenation usually cannot recover if their hit points have been reduced to –10 or fewer. Mummies that have fourth- or fifth-rank rejuvenation usually can recover even if their bodies have been completely destroyed.

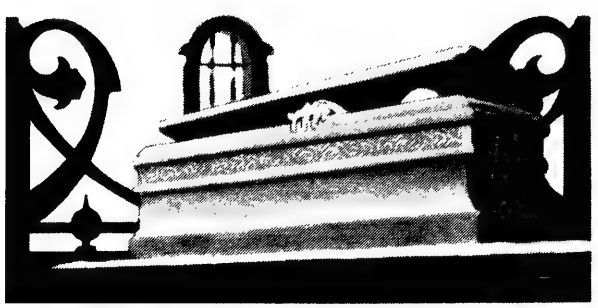
** The number before the slash shows the number of hit points a mummy of the listed rank usually regains during each time period. Both numbers can vary. The entry after the slash shows the minimum time a mummy usually requires to regain any hit points through rejuvenation at the listed rank.

† This column shows the amount of time the mummy must spend completely at rest when rejuvenating at the listed rank. The number before the slash shows the amount of rest required before the mummy begins regaining any hit points. The number after the slash shows the amount of time the mummy must rest after it stops rejuvenating. Rest times are added to any time actually spent regaining hit points. These numbers can vary.

**Spell immunities:** Wizard spells that are useless against all mummies are *Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting*, *blindness*, *charm monster*, *charm person*, *cloudkill*, *contagion*, *death spell*, *emotion*, *enervation*, *energy drain*, *eyebite*, *fear*, *finger of death*, *fire charm*, *haste*, *hold animal*, *hold monster*, *hold person*, *hypnotic pattern*, *hypnotism*, *insatiable thirst*, *irritation*, *magic jar*, *mass charm*, *mass suggestion*, *Otto's irresistible dance*, *phantasmal killer*, *power word blind*, *power word kill*, *power word stun*, *scare*, *sepia snake sigil*, *sleep*, *slow*, *suggestion*, *suffocate*, *symbol*, *vampiric touch*, and *wail of the banshee*.

The following priest spells are similarly useless against mummies: *Accelerate healing*, *age creature* (*restore youth*), *animal growth*, *anti-animal shell*, *breath of life* (*breath of death*), *chaotic sleep*, *cloak of fear*, *command*, *creeping doom*, *cure blindness* (*cause blindness*), *cure deafness* (*cause deafness*), *cure disease* (*cause disease*), *cure critical wounds* (*cause critical wounds*), *cure light wounds* (*cause light wounds*), *cure serious wounds* (*cause serious wounds*), *charm person or mammal*, *destruction*, *heal* (*harm*), *hold animal*, *hold person*, *legal thoughts*, *mindshatter*, *modify memory*, *nap*, *regenerate* (*wither*), *restoration* (*energy drain*), *rigid thinking*, and *slay living*.

As of this publication, two more *Van Richten's Guides* are in the planning stages: one concerning fiends that find their way into Ravenloft and become trapped there, and a treatise about the Vistani. Those readers who have suggestions for future subjects worthy of van Richten's research may send them to "Ravenloft," care of TSR, Inc.



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# Ravenloft®

Campaign Setting

# Domains and Denizens

by Bruce Nesmith with Andria Hayday

# DOMAINS AND DENIZENS

# Supplementary Rules for the RAVENLOFT® Campaign Setting

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1108

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# I: DOMAINS OF THE CORE

Welcome to the core of the Demiplane of Dread, Ravenloft's continent of discontent. Strahd and Azalin rule here, as do Harkon Lukas, Lord Soth, Mordenheim's monster, and many other wretched lords of legendary tragedy. This chapter unveils their domains for the Dungeon Master to look upon; player characters should wait for him or her to guide them into the night, and not read these pages.

In fact, the main land mass of Ravenloft is generally referred to as the *Core*, but this is a game term only. To those few natives who are knowledgeable of the misty lands of Ravenloft, it's more likely to be called "the World" or by its individual domain names. The lands of the Core are pictured on one of the large maps in this boxed set. The player or Dungeon Master who has adventured in Ravenloft before the Grand Conjunction (and the publication of this campaign setting box) will note some changes in the geography: Some domains have disappeared, other (new) ones have been added, and a few Core domains have broken free to become islands of terror. See Chapter I of *Realm of Terror* (the other book in this boxed set) for a discussion of the Grand Conjunction and its effect on the land of the Mists.

Each of the current domains of the Core is described in the following pages. It may be helpful to refer to the map while reading about each one.

## An Overview

At this writing, the Core includes 20 domains. The Grand Conjunction resulted in a few startling changes to the geography of Ravenloft, yet by and large it looks much the same. At the heart lies Barovia, widely accepted as the first land to take shape when the demiplane was created. From that point the others have spread like a great stain, which continues to grow even now. To the north lies Darkon, while Valachan, Sithicus, Kartakass, and Hazlan reach furthest to the south. Nova Vaasa stretches along the eastern border, and to the west lies the Sea of Sorrows. Billowing vapors—the Ravenloft Mists—surround the entire continent. What lies beyond them is unknown.

The Balinok Mountains divide the Core from north to south, interrupted midway by the Grand Conjunction's most curious legacy, the Shadow Rift. Their spectacular peaks soar to extremes of nearly 10,000 feet, but they are enormous and looming throughout. Like Death's scythe the range curves eastward along Darkon's southern border, disappearing into the Mists. The lands west of the Balinoks, sandwiched between the mountains and the Misty Border, are covered with thick forest. Nova Vaasa, east of the peaks, is mostly barren or grassy. Only one major road crosses the Balinoks: the Old Svalich Road in Barovia. The Timori Road used to connect the East and the West through Tepest, but the Grand Conjunction and the Shadow Rift permanently closed that passage. Other crossings through the Balinoks are possible but treacherous.

Three major rivers drain the lands north and west of the Balinoks: the Vuchar, the Musarde, and the Arden. The Vuchar travels from east to west across the northern plains of Darkon. The river's source lies beyond the Mists. As the Vuchar approaches Darkon's western shore, it turns south, meandering along the tip of Falkovnia. At Dementlieu, the Vuchar flows northeast to join the Musarde. The two rivers enter Lamordia as one, then split like fingers on a hand to cross the Lamordian delta, until their waters spill into the sea.

The Musarde River travels far to reach its juncture with the Vuchar. It flows from tributaries in Forlorn and Hazlan, carving a lush valley as it runs west through the wild green

hills of the southern domains. Spidery streams descend from the Balinoks to nourish it. Two major tributaries, the Luna and the Gundar, have theirs sources in Barovia.

The Arden River flows out of Valachan. It traces a northerly path through Sithicus and Verbrek before passing back into Valachan and on to Mordent. Before the Grand Conjunction, it was popularly believed that the river flowed directly out of the Mists, but the Vistani always insisted that Valachan was its source. It would seem that the Grand Conjunction proved them right, for there is no longer any doubt.

## The Misty Border

The Mists surround the entire Core, forming an embrace from which nothing, and no one, can readily escape. A person who steps into the Mists from within the demiplane becomes hopelessly misguided. Upon leaving the Mists, the character finds him or herself in Ravenloft once more. The vapor seems to rise directly from the land and its seas, but ordinary water vapor it certainly is *not.* At times the Mists surround an individual domain, but they always surround the Core. (See Chapter I in the *Realm of Terror* book for more details on travel in the Mists.)

## The Domains in Detail

The following pages describe each domain of the Core in alphabetical order. Each entry contains basic information about each domain's lord, geography, and natives, as well as tables listing the most likely incidental encounters. For general traits of the entire Demiplane of Dread, refer to Chapter I in *Realm of Terror.*

## Cities and Villages

Whenever a population for a city or village is provided, the number includes only folk who live within its limits. As a rule, an equal number of people (usually farmers and peasants) reside in the immediate area surrounding the city proper. Any village housing fewer than 1,000 people may not be listed on the maps. The remote areas of a domain also support inhabitants, who gather in small, uncharted villages or occupy secluded homesteads.

## Roads

The big color maps show only major roads, those which are heavily traveled. Most major roads are not paved, but the locals try to keep them in good repair. Many crude paths and rugged dirt roads crisscross the domains, leading to tiny villages and remote homesteads. The maps do not include these smaller byways.

## The Borders

Domain borders represent physical as well as political boundaries. Usually the borders are open and are indistinguishable to the average traveler. At a moment's notice, however, they may close and prevent any traveler's escape. The method of closing varies from domain to domain. In some the Mists rise, and those who enter them simply find themselves back in the domain. In others the land sprouts a wall of skulls or gives rise to an impenetrable wall of fire, among other possibilities. The borders close simply because the lord *wants* them to do so and the land grants his or her wish. A sealed border usually means that someone has attracted the lord's attention. Because of the strange occurrences there, most natives avoid settling too close to any domain's border.

## Incidental Encounters

The term "random encounter" is a misnomer in the RAVENLOFT® game, as *no* meeting should

happen by chance there. Horror requires a carefully structured sequence of events, and battling wandering monsters is a distraction in that environment, amounting to little more than busy work for the player characters. On the other hand, the Dungeon Master may wish to introduce a few *incidental* encounters with native creatures, to help establish setting and mood.

Toward that end, each domain lists the monsters that lurk in its shadows, divided into two frequencies of occurrence: common and rare. Percentage chances for encounters are included for convenience, but they certainly need not be adhered to. The AD&D® 2nd Edition rules include more categories, but these two suffice here. The lists may be further divided if desired.

The Dungeon Master may wish to run an encounter with a monster that's not listed in the table, too, and that's fine. Other monsters may well live in Ravenloft or enter through the Mists,

but those creatures still should fit the flavor of the demiplane, like spectres, shadows, hell hounds, skeletons, or ghosts. Monsters that aren't traditionally associated with the horror genre can also be used in the RAVENLOFT campaign setting, but they should be chosen for their ability to advance and enhance the story and atmosphere, not just because they're tough.

An encounter with a small animal is possible in almost any domain, but these too can be used to create fear and tension. A confrontation with a rabbit for its own sake is boring, but if done well, an encounter with a small animal can help build suspense. For example, tell players their characters hear something scurrying softly through the brush. Each time they investigate, the creature eludes them, until they believe something horrible is on their trail. When the creature finally proves to be a harmless bunny, the characters will enjoy a moment of relief. (That's when the real horror should appear—such as a werewolf leaping over the rabbit to attack them.)

The small animals listed below can appear in nearly any domain, at virtually any time. Other species of the Dungeon Master's choice may be substituted as appropriate.

**✣ Small Animals Table ✣**

| Roll 1d12 | Result |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1–6 chipmunks |
| 2 | 1–2 ferrets |
| 3 | 1–2 foxes |
| 4 | 1–2 hedgehogs |
| 5 | 1–12 monkeys |
| 5 | 1–8 opossums |
| 7 | 1–12 rabbits |
| 8 | 1–4 raccoons |
| 9 | 1–6 squirrels |
| 10 | 1–3 snakes |
| 11 | 1–2 woodchucks |
| 12 | 1–8 wild pigs |

# I: DOMAINS OF THE CORE

## Barovia

**The lord and the law:** Count Strahd von Zarovich, master vampire, rules this land. The locals don't know he is a vampire, but they're sure he has lived far longer than any man should. Strangely, they still believe he is human. They call him the devil Strahd, but that refers to his personality, not his species.

Some lords do not openly rule their domains and the populace is completely ignorant of their power, but Strahd is not one of these. He is a cruel tyrant whom the folk dare not disobey. Fortunately, Strahd rules from the shadows. He rarely appears in public, though rumors of his "visits" are common. The folk's daily lives do not concern him. So long as they produce maidens whose lily-white necks can hold his interest, he will not interfere with their dismal routines.

Strahd does not govern as would a king or prince—he makes few formal commandments, and he doesn't even collect regular taxes. The latter task is for the few *boyars* (landholders) and *burgomasters* (mayors) of Barovia. But like the peasants, the boyars and the burgomasters bow to Strahd. The vampire lord takes what he wants, be it gold, labor, or life. On rare occasions Strahd has established laws. The most notable is the law stating that anyone who enters his castle uninvited will be put to death. Of course, many invited guests have suffered the same fate.

**The land:** Barovia rests in the Balinok Mountains. Through long winters into late springs the peaks are capped with snow and ice. The two highest summits, Baratak and Ghakis, reach over 10,000 feet with a quick, deadly ascent. In summer the snows slip from their granite crags, but their lofty pinnacles and shadowy crevices stay icy year-round. Only Baratak and Ghakis reach above the tree line; the other twisting ridges are densely forested. The terrain is rough, with frequent outcroppings and small but sheer cliffs. Only the areas surrounding the village of Barovia and the valley of Lake Zarovich are easily traversable.

Barovia's dales begin to green in late spring. Glittering streams twist through the steep, spongy meadows, carrying snowmelt that eventually feeds the Musarde River in distant domains. Aspen, fir, and pines fill the valleys. The Svalich woods surround Strahd's castle and the village of Barovia before the sea of trees bleeds into valleys farther east. The Tepurich Forest fills the western valleys.

Wildlife thrives in the woods, deer and rabbits especially. Songbirds flit through the trees. Rats, which replace the usual peeping rodents, are strangely abundant. Common predators include wolves that thickly infest the forests, and small black bears. Ravens and hawks cross the skies by day. At night, owls and huge flocks of bats take wing.

The Old Svalich Road, one of the two regularly traveled routes through the Balinoks, crosses the Barovian domain. The road leads to two major settlements: Vallaki, between the two large peaks, and the village of Barovia, over a pass farther east. Vallaki, population 1,500, lies on the southern shore of Lake Zarovich, Barovia's largest lake. Its inhabitants are mostly fishermen, but an equal number of farmers and herders live in outlying plots around the lake. The farms are small affairs, most of them terraced on hillsides. Orchards of hardy Barovian apples form drifts of pink-and-white blossoms in spring. Plums, used to make the brandywine *tuika,* also grow in the valley.

East of Vallaki, the Old Svalich Road climbs a pass, switchbacking to ease the ascent. From the vantage of the pass, travelers can observe the Svalich Road as it leads to the village of Barovia. Natives have nicknamed this route the Devil's Descent. The village of Barovia lies in a valley, surrounded by a collar of dense fog. (See "Strahd's choking fog," below.) Once inside the ring of fog, the road crosses the River Ivlis, then follows the river's course toward Barovia. Castle Ravenloft, Strahd's home, is

perched on a 1,000-foot precipice north of the road, brooding over the village.

Over 500 people inhabit the village of Barovia. The buildings are well built timber-and-plaster constructions of two or three stories. Many are whitewashed. The eaves are often adorned with floral and geometric patterns in yellow and red. A few farmers work the soil surrounding the village, growing mainly potatoes, turnips, and cabbage. Shepherds live outside the ring of fog, tending their animals as best they can. At night, the villagers sometimes hear one of the poor beasts screaming as a wolf takes it down. The village has an evil reputation; no one with any goodness of heart wants to move there.

**Strahd's choking fog:** A ring of fog surrounds the village of Barovia and Strahd's castle at all times. This fog, ranging from 200 to 500 feet thick, is one the domain's most deadly features. The vapor infuses itself around a character's vital organs, and acts as a latent poison. It does not harm its victims as long as they remain within the ring of fog, but characters who attempt to leave this small area, passing through the fog without the Count's express permission, begin to choke. Each hour they spend outside the ring of fog, they lose a point of Constitution. When victims reach 3 points, they fall unconscious. Each point lost below that requires a saving throw vs. death, and failure means a character dies. No known spells or magical items can prevent or otherwise affect the poison. If the saving throw at 0 Constitution is successful, the character has fought off the poison. He or she recovers 1 point of Constitution per day, and regains consciousness when reaching 3 points again.

**Closing the borders:** The choking fog always surrounds the village of Barovia, but the domain's borders are usually clear. However, Strahd can raise the choking fog at the borders any time, sealing his entire land.

**The folk:** Barovians tend to be thick and stocky, with broad shoulders and sturdy hips. Most of them have brown or black hair, but occasionally a dark-eyed blonde is born. The women wear their hair long and loose as a rule, though girls may braid it. Older women cover their heads with kerchiefs. Most Barovian women dress darkly at all times, as it is their custom to wear black for five years even when the most distant relative has died. The men, in contrast, wear white shirts and embroidered sheepskin vests, and they don a black arm band only when an immediate family member has passed away. Barovian males often wear droopy mustaches; bachelors usually have beards, but older men tend to shave.

These people bear the burden of Strahd's yoke every day, so they tend to be reserved and surly or gruff. They keep to themselves and don't cause problems because troublemakers tend to end up dead—or worse. Most of all, Barovians dread the night. Before the sun sets, all natives are in their homes, with every entry barred and sealed. (Only the most horrid mishap would prevent a native from taking shelter by night.) Neither pitiful begging nor chilling cries of agony will open their doors after nightfall. The folk do not emerge from their homes until the sun has cleared the mountains to the east.

Except when conducting a funeral, Barovians do not frequent their churches, for they feel that the gods have abandoned them. The continuing evil of their tyrant lord and his routine slayings have understandably led them to this belief. Each village has a temple or church building, but it usually lies in disrepair. Smaller villages may not even have a proper priest.

Occasionally, a young couple filled with the optimism of new love will arrange a church wedding with a gay and boisterous procession. That only occurs in the smaller villages. Gone are the days when families advertised the availability of a girl for marriage by hanging a wreath of wild flowers on the door. Those girls usually disappeared.

Barovians speak *Balok,* a language full of unusual consonant combinations. There is a

20% chance per individual that they speak a language that player characters understand. In large groups of more than a dozen natives, player characters have a 90% chance of finding someone who speaks a common tongue.

Strahd allows the Vistani great freedom in Barovia. They offer him information about his land and the rest of the demiplane. In exchange he grants them safety within his domain. Anyone who encounters a Vistana in Barovia can be sure that Strahd will know of the meeting within a day.

The Vistani maintain a semipermanent camp at the base of Castle Ravenloft, near a pool formed by the river Ivlis. Most Barovians consider them to be amoral thieves, but still pay to watch their shows and conduct trade with them. However, Vistani are not allowed to loiter within town limits. (See Chapter IV for more information on these people.)

**Encounters:** There are two peculiar creatures who skulk in the dark land of Strahd von Zarovich. First, the accursed Jacqueline Montarri wanders through Barovia, a tragic victim of Vistani wrath. She keeps a collection of some three dozen heads in jars, each of which is interchangeable with the one on her shoulders. Second, Jezra Wagner the Ice Queen haunts the slopes of Mount Baratak. Both dark ladies' stories are detailed in RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®, vol. 2 (2139).

Adventurers who linger or wander carelessly through Barovia are bound to meet with several creatures. During the day there's a 20% chance for an encounter with a native Barovian creature. By night the chance rises to 33%. These percentage chances apply only to the villages and countryside. Intruders who spend time in or around Castle Ravenloft can expect to encounter virtually any form of undead *except a lich* (Strahd will not tolerate the presence of those beings in the least).

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Bats | Any undead |
| Rats | Cloakers |
| Skeletons | Crawling claws |
| Small animals | Hell hounds |
| Strahd skeletons | Invisible stalkers |
| Strahd zombies | Jackalweres |
| Worg wolves | Lycanthropes |
| Zombies | Will o' wisps |

Those brave or foolish enough to challenge the Count in his deadly castle may do so in the adventure module *House of Strahd* (9419). Both lord and land are the subject of numerous other adventures and novels as well, including the game module *Roots of Evil* (9413) and the novels *Vampire of the Mists* (8056), *Knight of the Black Rose* (8057), and *I, Strahd* (8062).

## Borca

**The lord and the law:** When the Grand Conjunction occurred, many of the darklords were dismayed. Even though they had been held prisoner by their own lands, the sudden realization that the cage had evaporated, and that they were no longer masters of their domains, was disconcerting. Such was the case with the spiritual twins, Ivana Boritsi (lord of Borca) and Ivan Dilisnya (lord of Dorvinia). As the misty borders of Ravenloft dissolved, the distant cousins flew to each other, sure that their subjects would turn on them in the tumult.

When the Grand Conjunction collapsed and the dark powers reclaimed the lands, the two lords were together, so their lands became one. Now forced to share the mantle of power, the two of them constantly bicker and plot against one another. Each of them constantly seeks a new poison that will kill the other, yet both remain immune to every toxin, leaving only the people of Borca (and its visitors) to scream and convulse under the effects of each new venom.

Nevertheless, the sadistic joy of poisoning one's adversaries is something they both relish, and in that evil they find common ground. Separately and yet together they rule the land, rendering Borca doubly dangerous. Either Ivana Boritsi is the more dominating of the two lords, or else Ivan Dilisnya is too crazed to care, but the new land retains the name of Borca.

Ivana may be female, but she's no lady. The natives of Borca call her the Black Widow, for loving her is a fatal affliction. Years ago, when she believed lover unfaithful, Ivana infected his body with a slow poison that she transmitted through a kiss. According to Borcan lore, Ivana still harbors this poison in her body. Like the carrier of a disease, she herself is immune to its effects, but anyone who samples her passion may die. In Borca, a mother's greatest fear is that Ivana will fancy her handsome young son and literally love him to death.

Before the Grand Conjunction Ivana maintained a police force of "rent collectors" that terrorized the people, but since Ivan Dilisnya came to share her realm, he has become the domain's enforcer. However, he uses this power politically, as he did as lord of Dorvinia. If muscle or justice is wanted, it must be bought. Bribes, in fact, are required for every political favor, be it simple information, free passage on the roads, "protection," or keeping enough crops to feed one's children. Power means knowing the right people and serving them well—but not too well. "Middle management" continually changes as one faction wipes out another. No one dares lay a hand on Dilisnya, however. Those who have tried it have perished in their sleep.

**The land:** Borca lies in the green, rugged valleys northwest of Barovia. Vegetation grows wild and lush. In spring and summer, drifts of wildflowers blanket the hillsides. Barovia's snowcapped peaks, Mounts Ghakis and Baratak, loom on the southeastern horizon, sometimes flanking the rising sun. To the north Mount Gries, a ragged peak encircled by a ring of mist, is the tallest peak within the realm.

Borca has five settlements of noteworthy size: Ilvin, population 4,000; Lechberg,

population 5,500; Levkarest, population 8,500; Sturben, population 2,000; and Vor Ziyden, 1,000. The Boritsis built their opulent estates near Levkarest, in the south of Borca, while the Dilisnya estate lies at the northern border of the domain, near Lechberg. The area boasts several public hot springs, but Ivana reserves the pools near her chateau for her use alone.

**Closing the borders:** Any drink in Borca, even water from a stream, can become a poison that imprisons characters in this domain. Imported beverages act the same. When either Ivan or Ivana wants to seal Borca, a change takes place in the fabric of the land and air at the edge of the domain. The borders become a catalyst for the drink. When someone leaves Borca, the drink turns to lethal poison. The victim immediately feels feverish and woozy and will die in a few turns unless he or she reenters the domain. The drink remains potent for 48 hours and can be triggered as long as the borders are active.

**The folk:** Most Borcans are poor. The aristocracy has taxed them into abject poverty. The people have a sullen and resigned air about them. Those on lower rungs of the social ladder can't afford to pay bribes and never will be allowed to know the right people.

**Encounters:** Those who visit Borca should beware of the ermordenung Nostalia Romaine, whose very touch is as deadly as Ivan Dilisnya's. She is fully described in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139). Otherwise, by day or night there is a 25% chance for an encounter with one of the creatures listed below.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Bats | Ghosts |
| Bears | Haunts |
| Boars | Lycanthropes |
| Great cats | Poltergeists |
| Rats | Will o' wisps |
| Snakes | |
| Spiders | |
| Wolves | |

## Darkon

**The lord and the law:** Azalin the lich rules Darkon as a king. He is the "iron fist in a velvet glove." His subjects know he's a wizard, but don't suspect that he's a lich. They know he has outlived any normal man, but still believe him to be human. Azalin takes pains to maintain this image.

Azalin sets the law by decree. A baron governs each town and its surroundings, setting minor regulations concerning that area. Each town has its own judicial system and a police force to enforce the baron's will. Most police officers are 2nd-level warriors with studded leather armor, short swords, and shields. All officials of all levels bow to Azalin.

Azalin also maintains his own force of secret police, the *Kargat.* They can disregard any regional law and fear no reprisals. They are accountable only to the leaders of their force, who are accountable only to Azalin.

The average Kargat agent is a 5th-level warrior, and most high-level Kargat operatives are vampires. Werebeasts flesh out the middle ranks. Most Darkonite adults know the Kargat exists and can sometimes even guess who is a member of it, but they still are unaware of the Kargat's true, monstrous nature.

Of all the darklords, perhaps Azalin understands the nature of Ravenloft best. A brilliant researcher, he has fully measured the scope of his demiplanar cage and the harsh limits the dark powers exert upon him. It is Azalin, himself, who incited the Grand Conjunction. In fact, the lich would have successfully destroyed and escaped the Demiplane of Dread had his abiding hatred for Strahd von Zarovich not clouded his mind and allowed a beleaguered party of heroes to unravel the catastrophic phenomenon. (Those who would experience these momentous events and take a part in preserving the misty prison of evil should play the adventure modules *From the Shadows* (9375) and *Roots of Evil* (9413).

**The land:** Darkon is the largest domain in Ravenloft. It stretches across the northern edge of the entire Core, from the Misty Border in the east to the Sea of Sorrows in the west. Falkovnia, the Shadow Rift, Keening, Tepest, and Nova Vaasa all lie along on the southern horizon. To the north lies only mist.

The Vuchar River flows east to west across Darkon, forming a broad valley spotted with backwaters and small ponds. Other streams flow from the mountains to feed the river. Water is plentiful throughout Darkon, though its purity is sometimes in question.

Ravenloft's largest city, Il Aluk, is located on the Vuchar in Darkon. It has a population of 25,000. Compared to other domains, Darkon is littered with settlements. The table below lists the names of the major towns, their populations, and the racial mix in each of them. (Unlike most domains, Darkon is multiracial.) When a single race is given, it means roughly half the population is of that race. The remaining folk represent a mixture of races.

| Village | Pop. | Race |
|---|---|---|
| Corvia | 4,000 | Dwarf |
| Delagia | 1,500 | Halfling |
| Il Aluk | 25,000 | Mixed |
| Karg | 8,500 | Human |
| Martira Bay | 10,000 | Human |
| Maykle | 2,000 | Human |
| Mayvin | 1,500 | Gnome |
| Nartok | 7,500 | Human |
| Neblus | 2,000 | Elf |
| Nevuchar Springs | 1,000 | Elf |
| Rivalis | 5,000 | Halfling |
| Sidnar | 1,000 | Elf |
| Tempe Falls | 2,500 | Dwarf |
| Viaki | 8,000 | Human |

**Closing the borders:** When Azalin wishes to seal Darkon, a wall of undead, 20 creatures deep, masses at the border. They are turned as liches, thanks to their lord, but there are obviously too many of them to part the way with even the most potent holy symbol.

**The folk:** Darkon is a racial melting pot. Visitors are often dazzled by the confusion of races and social customs. Darkon's people come from many different worlds and regions, most of them outside Ravenloft. A traveler can find any mixture of eye color, hair, and skin tone here. Demihumans are disliked and distrusted in other lands, but Darkon has no such bias. Members of a given race do tend to be friendlier toward their own kind, however.

Darkonite immigrants share one key trait: After 1d3 months in the domain, they lose all memory of their previous habitations. Only newcomers remember their ties to another realm. Eventually, all of them believe that their family has lived in Darkon or neighboring domains for generations. Many who come alone to this land believe all their loved ones died in Darkon before them. As if to prove it, they may even adopt gravestones in a local cemetery and visit them faithfully. Since many Darkonites actually have been in Ravenloft for generations, it is impossible to know whose memories are false or true.

According to local legend, Darkon is a realm of the dead, rudely displaced by the living. Eventually, the legend says, the dead will rise up to reclaim their land. Since this appears to actually have happened on several occasions—when soldiers of Falkovnia invaded, were slain, and arose as undead (under the control of Azalin)—the story is widely believed.

**Encounters:** There are three creatures of note that might be encountered in Darkon. First, the night hag Styrix waylays travelers in the town of Martira Bay, using their life energy to power her *Rift Spanner,* a device which she hopes will help her escape Ravenloft. Second, a treacherous meazel named Salizarr slips through the tunnels of a sewer labyrinth below the streets of Il Aluk, seeking victims to drag below the ground and devour. And third, while he is not trapped in Darkon, the bardic lich Andres Duvall was created during a conflict with Azalin, and he often wanders this domain in defiance of the darklord. Styrix, Salizarr, and Duvall are all detailed in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).

Darkon is a melting pot of creatures as well as characters. This domain boasts an unusually wide variety of monsters. By day or night, the chance for an incidental encounter is 25%, but half of the daytime encounters are with normal inhabitants of virtually any race. About half of any nocturnal encounters are with roving undead that act as the eyes and ears of Azalin. Along the borders of Darkon, undead can always be found patrolling by night.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Any undead | Dopplegangers |
| Bats | Drow |
| Goblins | Griffons |
| Jermlaine | Hags |
| Kobolds | Hippogriffs |
| Snakes | Imps |
| Spiders | Leucrotta |
| Wolves | Lycanthropes |
| | Sahuagin |
| | Shambling mounds |

## Dementlieu

**The lord and the law:** Dominic d'Honaire the hypnotist rules Dementlieu from behind the scenes. Publicly he acts as advisor to the lord-governor, Marcel Guignol, whom the folk believe to be the ruler of Dementlieu. In actuality, the lord-governor is just d'Honaire's puppet.

Lord-governor Guignol writes laws and adjudicates important trials. Five advisors, headed by Dominic d'Honaire, counsel the lord-governor. D'Honaire controls the advisors as well as Guignol.

City militia helps d'Honaire enforce the law. Most of them are 2nd-level warriors equipped with studded leather armor, short swords, and whips.

**The land:** Dementlieu is a coastal domain on the Sea of Sorrows. Port-a-Lucine, the domain's largest village, sits on the shore of Parnault Bay. Chateaufaux is a trade village near the eastern border.

**Closing the borders:** D'Honaire can seal his domain with a mirage and the help of the land itself. Standing at the border, a character sees the lands of Dementlieu before and behind him or her. No matter which way the would-be escapee walks, he or she moves farther into the domain—the direction chosen becomes the actual route toward the center of the land. In a forest, characters might not notice the effect until they emerge from the woods to find themselves back where they started. At the coast, the Sea of Sorrows disappears from view.

**The folk:** On the surface, life is normal and good in Dementlieu—most people have both food and shelter. Underneath, in the lower classes, lies discontent and fear. Most people treat the poor as slaves to be ordered about without regard to their own desires. Poverty, disease, crime, and even murder are common at this level of society.

**Encounters:** Dominic d'Honaire has a powerful enemy whom travelers may have the misfortune to encounter: The living brain of Rudolph von Aubrecker, removed from its body by the nefarious Dr. Mordenheim of Lamordia, seeks to usurp the authority of d'Honaire by interfering with the darklord's mental control over the people of Dementlieu. (Aubrecker's living brain is described in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 [2139].)

Dementlieu itself doesn't have many monsters. Some evil marine creatures have been known to prey upon the land dwellers, but it isn't a common occurrence. Typically, there is a 25% chance for an encounter, day or night.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Deer | Boar |
| Snakes | Dopplegangers |
| Spiders | Goblins |
| | Kelpies |
| | Kobolds |
| | Sahuagin |

## Falkovnia

**The lord and the law:** Vlad Drakov, mercenary king, is lord of Falkovnia, and his brutal militia controls the domain. Not all are men-at-arms, however; bureaucrats also receive military commissions. Falkovnia has no police force, only the army (see "Encounters," below.), so trials are conducted by a military tribunal. Prisons are few and virtually empty because punishment is swift and harsh.

Drakov demands at least one execution each night, at the dinner hour. He takes his meal while observing the prisoner's slow death. On special evenings, as many as 40 people are impaled on tall, thick stakes for his enjoyment. Occasionally he calls in an orchestra to accompany their screams. If Ravenloft is a prison for the damned, then few deserve to be here more than Drakov.

**The land:** Falkovnia lies in the northwestern quarter of the Core, south of Darkon and east of Dementlieu. Small farms surround the settled areas, and wheat is their principal crop. Forests cover the rest of the domain. The roads are wide and well maintained for troop movement.

Lekar, Ravenloft's second largest settlement, lies on the west side of Falkovnia. Ravenloft has only a few walled cities, and Lekar is one of them. Over 15,000 people live within the walls, and nearly a quarter of them are soldiers. The city's location and the domain's excellent roads make the city a natural center for trade. Merchants fill the streets, handling wares from all the bordering domains. As traders bustle past, beggars glean what they can. They crouch in every doorway, pleading, their arms reaching up to those who walk by. Many beggars, crippled by the soldiers, cannot even stand. Most of Lekar's citizens live in squalor. The twisting alleys in the laborers' quarter are filled with sewage, mud, and dung.

Falkovnia has three other sizeable towns, each with some degree of fortification. Stangengrad, home to 6,500 people, is perched on the northern border, near Darkon. Another 5,000 Falkovnians live in Silbervas, on the shores of Lake Kriegvogel. Aerie, a village on the southern border, has a population of 2,000. Morfenzi, in the eastern foothills, is home to some 1,500 people.

Forests blanket most of this domain. Falkovnian timber is towering and black, unlike the trees in any other region. The dense wood is extremely difficult to fell, and clearing roads makes young men old before they reach age 30. Locals call these trees *vigila dimorta,* or "sentries of death." In eastern Falkovnia, where the Balinoks thrust toward the heavens, many of the trees have died. The bark and leaves are gone, but the naked cores still stand—bleached almost white, like driftwood. According to legend, one tree dies for every person Drakov executes. Some claim that the trees ignite and flames burn away the bark.

**Closing the borders:** The land does not close at Drakov's will, and he has no magical means to accomplish it. To control the borders, Drakov orders his troops to patrol them. Word of the closure spreads quickly among the folk, along with a warning to travelers. Those caught trying to escape are killed on sight.

**The folk:** Falkovnians are a downtrodden lot—overtaxed, overworked, and terrorized by Drakov's soldiers. Every child is branded on the forehead with the sign of a hawk, Drakov's mark, to make clear their servitude. The folk despise Drakov, but dare not curse him in public. They haven't the strength to overthrow him. Traveling to another domain is forbidden to all but a few; only foreigners can cross the borders, but not without harassment.

In the cities and towns, people wear drab clothing. Even perceptive foreigners adhere to this custom, because no one wants to stand out from the crowd—to attract notice is to put one's life in danger. In more remote areas, life is still hard, but Drakov's squads are less oppressive.

Falkovnia is no place for demihumans. Drakov has declared them state property and considers them chattel. He encourages intermarriage, but the folk forbid it. Children with only one human parent are claimed by the state at birth.

Soldiers represent the highest class of Falkovnian citizens; no person can aspire to a higher status. Only humans can be soldiers. Falkovnia's elite are all military men who are fiercely loyal to Drakov. Officers pay no taxes, travel without restriction, and enjoy many other privileges. Only soldiers can carry weapons. Citizens who arm themselves have committed a capital offense, for which their entire family must suffer.

**Encounters:** The city of Lekar is plagued by the vampyre Vladimir Ludzig, a particularly bloodthirsty monster (whose story is fully told in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 [2139]). Otherwise, there is a 50% chance for an incidental encounter throughout the domain, day or night. Falkovnia holds very few undead (but the living are horrid enough). Near populated areas, half of all encounters are with soldiers. Most of them are 3rd-level fighters equipped with scale mail, spears, and shields. Elite fighting men are 5th-level warriors with banded mail and swords or polearms.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Birds of prey | Bear |
| Boar | Hippogriffs |
| Deer | Kobolds |
| Griffons | Jermlaine |
| Wolves | Lycanthropes |
| | Satyrs |
| | Will o' wisps |

## Forlorn

**The lord and the law:** Tristen ApBlanc rules this land from Castle Tristenoira. By day he is a highly charismatic vampyre, but by night he is a ghost. This lord is trapped not only within his domain, but within his castle itself. In those strange halls that actually defy time (see the *Castles Forlorn* boxed adventure [1088]), he forever seeks the means to escape his curse. In the meanwhile, he mentally commands the goblyns that overrun the domain, ordering them to capture hapless travelers and bring them to the castle.

**The land:** Forlorn is one of the Core's oldest and smallest domains. It is nestled between Barovia, Kartakass, and Hazlan in the Balinok Mountains. The land is forested and lush, but few normal animals live here. There are no villages in Forlorn. In a narrow, twisting valley lies the Lake of Red Tears. Red-granite cliffs surround the lake, reflecting in the water as the sun sinks low every evening. Those who have visited and fled the domain tell tales of sea monsters lurking in its impenetrable depths.

**Closing the borders:** Escaping Castle Tristenoira is the most relevant challenge in

this domain, yet rumors claim that would-be escapees find themselves paralyzed when they attempt to leave Forlorn, unable to move even through the aid of a *remove paralysis* spell.

**The folk:** Forlorn is largely populated by goblyns (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol 1 [2122]), who systematically raze the forests and play strange, violent games. There are also a few tiny conclaves of human druids, vainly attempting to deliver the land from evil, but Tristen hates them, the goblyns hunt them, and they are careful to remain hidden from sight most of the time.

**Encounters:** Zombie wolves (see the *Castles Forlorn* box) and gremishkas (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 3 [2153], available in November of 1994, or consult the original RAVENLOFT *Realm of Terror* boxed set) may occasionally cross the traveler's path, but goblyns are the main threat and most common creatures found in Forlorn. Encounters in the castle are another matter, where ghosts run rampant.

## Hazlan

**The lord and the law:** Hazlik, an evil wizard, rules this domain, and every inhabitant knows he's the absolute dictator. His small council of "governors" (basically killers) impose his will on the folk. Most of Hazlik's enforcers are 1st-level fighters equipped with scale mail and war hammers.

**The land:** Hazlan lies south of Barovia and Nova Vaasa, in the southeastern corner of the Core. The eastern half of this domain spreads into lazy, rolling hills that are grassy and easy to travel. In the west, the Balinoks rise up and the terrain becomes rocky and rough. The northern part of the land is largely uninhabited wilderness.

Hazlan has two major towns, Toyalis and Sly-Var. Toyalis houses 8,000 people and Sly-Var is home to about 4,500. The folk dwell in simple, whitewashed wooden homes with red tile roofs.

**Closing the borders:** When Hazlik wants to seal his domain, a wall of fire leaps up at the borders. He must replenish the flames every hour, so the wall usually burns less than a day.

**The folk:** The folk in Hazlan devote their efforts to pleasing Hazlik, and he's a tough man to satisfy. The governors relay his commands and the folk obey each one instantly. Noncompliance means death or a trip to "the tables," and a simple misunderstanding may mean the same. "The tables" are where Hazlik performs his evil experiments. Fear of this fate makes Hazlani natives paranoid and distrustful. Were it not for the threat of burning on the border, the people would leave en masse.

**Encounters:** Hazlan is a cornucopia of strange creatures, many of them misshapen. There is a 33% chance for an incidental encounter, twice a day and three times at night.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Bats | Berbalangs |
| Deer | Crimson deaths |
| Snakes | Darkenbeasts |
| Wolves | Imps |
| | Leucrotta |
| | Mongrelmen |

## Invidia

**The lord and the law:** Madame Gabrielle Aderre the witch rules Invidia. The natives don't suspect she is the lord, but they know she is a powerful and wicked enchantress.

**The land:** Invidia is a southwestern domain cradled between Verbrek, Sithicus, and Barovia. The Musarde River snakes from south to north across the land and is joined by the Gundar River, creating a lush, twisting valley. Karina is the only major settlement, with a population of 2,000. It serves as a way station for river traffic, although boats arrive infrequently.

**Closing the borders:** When Gabrielle wants to seal Invidia, a ring of terror encircles the domain. It is neither visible nor tangible, but

characters who attempt to cross the border against the lord's wishes find themselves gripped by an unreasoning *fear* (as the spell, but no save is allowed). Consequently, they flee 100 yards toward the center of the domain before they regain control of their wits.

**The folk:** Crimes of violence and passion are common in Invidia. Grudges fester, arguments grow hot, and pain and sorrow inevitably follow. The folk view even their own kin with a suspicious or fearful eye, but they fear Madame Aderre most of all. Her infrequent visits to town always lead to a rash of violent conflicts and broken friendships.

**Encounters:** Visitors to the city of Karina should beware of the Midnight Slasher, a bloodthirsty stalker in the foggy back streets and darkened alleys. The madman is described in detail in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).

The chance for an incidental encounter with one of the creatures below is 33%, once each day and once again after nightfall. Away from town, travelers may encounter Madame Aderre and her charmed servitors. This is one of the few lands in which a Vistani escort may be deadly. They themselves are in no danger, but those with them are not immune to Madame Aderre's powers.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Deer | Jermlaine |
| Snakes | Will o'wisps |
| Wolves | Wolfweres |

## Kartakass

**The lord and the law:** Harkon Lukas, a wolfwere, rules Kartakass. Although he is recognized and respected throughout the domain, most natives know him only as a bard. Only a handful of humans know him as a wolfwere. Fewer still know him as lord of Kartakass.

As befits the lord of a domain filled with bards, Harkon has been the subject of many tales. One of the most deadly involved his daughter, Akriel Lukas, who attempted to kill her own father with the help of Dr. Dominiani and Duke Gundar of Gundarak, but the wolfwere evaded the claws his patricidal child, thanks in part to a group of brave and lucky adventurers (see the adventure module *Feast of Goblyns* [9298]). Another oft-sung story about Harkon concerns his illegitimate son, Casamir, and the lord's efforts to develop their relationship (see the novel *Heart of Midnight* [8059]).

Kartakass is a small domain with few villages, but each has a *Meistersinger*—a kind of singing mayor—who sets rules and arbitrates any and all disputes in each village and its surroundings.

**The land:** Kartakass is a heavily forested domain in the rugged foothills of the Balinoks. The hills are riddled with caverns, both small and large. Fog is common in low areas, rising from the soil as the afternoon sun begins to wane. The brush is dense, the ground rocky, and the way through the trees is twisted. When straying from a road or clearing, riders on horseback barely move faster than a man on foot. When fog sets in, riding off-trail becomes impossible; riders must lead their mounts with a hand outstretched to clear the branches aside.

The town of Skald, near the center of Kartakass, is home to nearly 2,000 people. The place is known for its sheep whose wool is particularly fine. The houses fit the Kartakan style: one story, with wooden frames, and steep, densely thatched roofs. The homes have many small, arched windows, each with heavy shutters that can be locked and barred from inside. The shutters are painted bright blue or green; virtually all Kartakans use the same two shades of paint. Villagers must labor continually to maintain the thatched roofs because night birds pick mercilessly at the straw. To avoid the problem, a few wealthy men have capped their homes with imported red tile.

The village of Harmonia, in the south, shelters about 1,500 people. They claim to have the finest singing voices in Ravenloft, and only the people of Skald dispute it. Harmonian architecture matches the description above, but the houses are larger. Villagers harbor livestock under their own roofs, in separate quarters at the rear of the house. Despite such precautions, their animals still fall prey to foxes and wolves.

Kartakans have cleared the land around each settlement for farming. Vegetables with bulbous roots thrive in the black Kartakan soil—beets grow to be 10 pounds or more apiece. The dark red bulbs and their green leafy tops are staples in the local cuisine.

Berries called *meekulbern* grow in wild, thorny thickets in the Kartakan hills. Natives distill the berries into *meekulbrau*. Reputedly, the bitter brew relaxes the throat and sweetens the voice. It's an acquired taste; most foreigners despise it.

**Closing the borders:** When Lukas wants to seal his domain, those who try to leave hear a sweet song that lulls them to sleep. (No spell or saving throw can prevent it, though player characters often try.) They'll waken 1d6 turns later, but if they try to move toward the border, they'll simply fall back asleep. In the meantime, a pack of wolves may come upon them. . . .

**The folk:** Most Kartakans have fair hair, blue-violet eyes, and pale complexions. Occasionally, a raven-haired child is born, with the same ivory skin and startling gaze. They are a lean, graceful breed.

Kartakans have rich, melodious voices—the kind granted to angels or sirens. The people have a melody for every labor, a song for every occasion. Their music drifts through the forests and echoes across the hills. Many tunes seem filled with sorrow, but in general Kartakans are content with life and fear only marauding wolf packs.

As the sun sinks below the horizon each night, Kartakans lock themselves in their homes. The wolves in Kartakass are thick as fleas on a rat, and unusually bold. They often wander the streets, and they can breach any gate not securely fastened.

The people of Kartakass love nothing more than a good story. Most can spin yarns easily, due to years of practice. As the wolves prowl outside at night, families gather at the hearth to exchange tall tales. They call them *feeshkas* ("little lies"). A visitor who asks a Kartakan a simple question is likely to hear a believable tall tale that sends him or her on a wild goose chase. The natives try the same tricks on each other, and are good natured about being the victims of such a ruse. No one, however, deliberately sends a friend on a chase that may very well strand him or her in the wilderness at night.

The Meistersinger also instructs the children in music. Kartakans believe that the gods handed down many of their songs. These divine songs, called *Mora,* teach lessons about morality, goodness, and happiness. The Meistersinger nurtures order and harmony in the village by passing on these moral lessons. Knowledge of Mora, and the ability to interpret and sing them well, determines his or her stature in Kartakass. Each village holds an annual singing and storytelling contest to determine who will be Meistersinger, but the incumbent usually retains his or her position for many years.

**Encounters:** Each day there's a 50% chance for an incidental encounter. Each night, there is a 25% chance of an encounter every hour. One quarter of encounters involve wolves—normal wolves, dire wolves, werewolves, wolfweres, and (in winter) winter wolves.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Boar | Ghouls |
| Dire wolves | Goblins |
| Kobolds | Leucrotta |
| Werewolves | Werefoxes |
| Wolves | Wights |
| | Wolfweres |

## Keening

**The lord and the law:** A banshee called Tristessa rules this domain. Unlike most groaning spirits, she can wail *three* times each day. Once a powerful and evil drow elf in Arak (a domain that disappeared after the Grand Conjunction), her spirit was absorbed into the Mists upon her death, and the dark powers granted her the small land of Keening. The banshee can sense the presence of any living creature in her domain, but she usually attacks only those who are foolish enough to begin an ascent of her mountain. Tristessa is featured in the game accessory *Darklords* (9331).

**The land:** If Tristessa is wailing, travelers can hear her chilling moans the moment they cross the border. This small land surrounds the single peak of Mount Lament, in which the banshee lives. There are no signs of life—only the big, lonely mountain. At its base lies a ruined town that once might have housed 10,000 people. According to the Vistani, the mountain is honeycombed with tunnels and underground chambers.

**Closing the borders:** Tristessa can seal her domain with a wall of wind. No one can walk or fly through this wall, and no magic can diminish its force.

**The folk:** The living do not dwell in Keening—only zombies and wights, who fill the city at the base of the mountain. Their emotionless daily routine mocks the habits of their former lives. They attack any living being who dares to interfere with their existence.

**Encounters:** Any undead creature that does not feed upon flesh can be found here. (This eliminates ghouls, vampires, and the like.) No liches reside in Keening either. Every hour, there is a 25% chance for an encounter with wandering undead.

## Lamordia

**The lord and the law:** Mordenheim's monster, Adam, is the true lord of this domain, but that is not well known. Lamordians believe that Baron von Aubrecker governs the land.

**The land:** Lamordia is a coastal domain in the northwestern section of the Core. Darkon, Falkovnia, and Dementlieu huddle at its sides and back, and they seem to thrust Lamordia toward the Sea of Sorrows just as young boys might shove a buddy toward a dare. A relentless, cold wind blows out of the northwest and lashes Lamordia with its fury. In winter ice floes clog the harbors and great frozen slabs rear up on the rocky shore. It's not uncommon for Lamordia to be consumed by a blizzard while Darkon suffers only a drizzle and Dementlieu's skies are clear. In late spring the snowmelt in Lamordia turns roads into deep, clinging mud. In the short warm summers, clouds of mosquitoes drift across the domain, plaguing the deer and elk.

A forested ridge called the "Sleeping Beast" stretches along the eastern border of this domain, sheltering Falkovnia from Lamordian storms. The Musarde River slips past the southern tip of the Sleeping Beast, continuing north until it splinters into a delta.

Lamordia includes a portion of the Sea of Sorrows. Several islands lie off the northern tip of the domain, and they also are included in Adam's land. The largest, the Isle of Agony, is Adam's usual hideout. Beyond that is the island called Demise, which is home to the hideous medusa Althea. (Her story is recorded in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 [2139]).

During low tide in summer, a muddy causeway links the islands to the mainland. At that time it is possible to walk the causeway, but progress is slow and the mud can swallow a full-grown man to his waist or deeper if he doesn't choose his footing carefully. Seabirds add to the hiker's worries by diving, harassing, and even attacking. When the tide is high, water covers the causeway. In winter, jutting slabs of ice join the isles to the mainland. To cross the ice safely, travelers need ropes and ice picks.

Lamordia has two major settlements: Ludendorf and Neufurchtenburg, each housing fewer than 1,000 people. As in other domains, travelers will encounter isolated huts in the wilderness, but life there is too hard to attract many immigrants.

Schloss Mordenheim, Dr. Mordenheim's estate, is north of Ludendorf, on the coast. The manor has a reputation for being haunted and the locals avoid it. (They tolerate the doctor, but neither like nor trust him.) The estate is set upon a cliff. In spring and summer, the waves crash against the rocks below. The cliff is dotted with caves.

Lamordians are even more fearful of the Isle of Agony. Some claim it is home to a man-eating sea monster. Others call it "the devil's domicile." No one, not even adventurous young boys, will explore the island willingly.

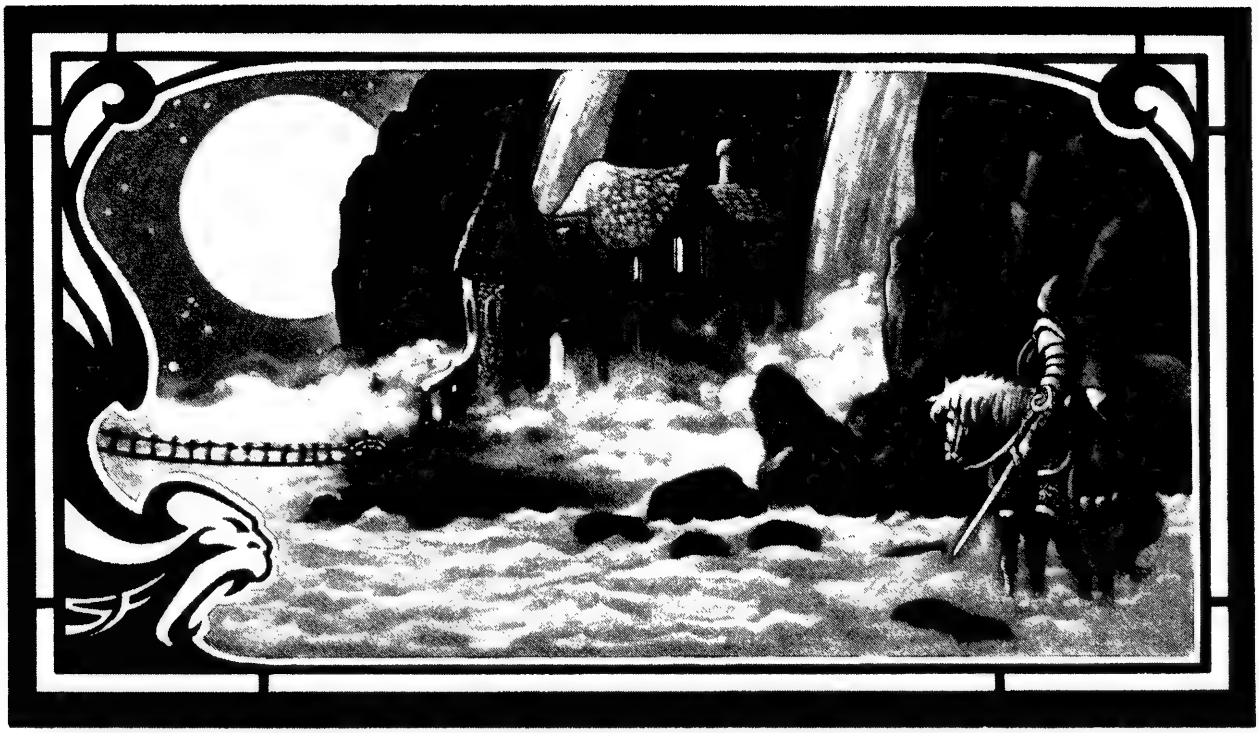
Baron von Aubrecker, the aristocrat who appears to rule this land, inhabits a castle perched on the Sleeping Beast, several miles south of Ludendorf.

**Closing the borders:** When Adam wants to close the borders, a driving blizzard thwarts those who attempt to leave.

**The folk:** Lamordians are righteous and hardy folk who withstand the winters in good spirits. Blizzards may keep them indoors, but snow itself is no hindrance—they travel on skis, sleighs, and snowshoes.

Most Lamordians are craftsmen. They spend the winter months carving furniture and building musical instruments. As soon as the snow melts and the roads are passable, their work is exported to other lands. The goods bring an excellent price, a third of which goes to the baron. Several trappers live in isolated areas of the domain, as do a few miners. Shepherds winter their animals on the leeward side of the Sleeping Beast.

The Lamordian diet is rich in protein and



fat—a pudding thickened with sheep's blood is a local favorite, and cheese made from goat's milk is a dietary staple.

**Encounters:** The sinister child-vampire Merilee resides in this domain, deceiving hapless adults with her apparent youth and innocence. (Her tale is told in the game accessory *Darklords* [9331].) Other than her, there are few monsters roaming Lamordia, but there is always a chance to encounter Mordenheim's monster or a common flesh golem. Occasionally, intelligent creatures move here from other domains, attracted by the relative isolation. Roll for an encounter once each day and night; the chance is 25%.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Boar | Bear |
| Caribou | Flesh golems |
| Giant weasels | Giant lynxes |
| Moose | Lycanthrope (seawolves) |
| Wolves | |

Those interested in braving the Isle of Agony and facing Adam should play the adventure module *Adam's Wrath* (9439). Others who are more curious about the darklord's creator should consult the novel *Mordenheim* (8064).

## Markovia

**The lord and the law:** Frantisek Markov, the beast lord, rules Markovia. The beast men call him *Diosamblet,* or "the god who walks among us." The Vistani call him "Master of Pain."

**The land:** Markovia is wild and undeveloped. Before the Grand Conjunction, it perched in the Balinoks near the center of the Core, but after the Grand Conjunction it reappeared in the Sea of Sorrows. In either case, it includes a major valley and surrounding peaks. No towns exist, only occasional groupings of crude huts that were built by Markov's beast men.

**Closing the borders:** When Markov wants to seal Markovia, the seas rise and tumble in

violent bursts against the shores, and sharks teem in the waters, seeking the objects of Markov's wrath. It is possible to enter and leave Markovia through the Mists, but they usually will not rise if Markov doesn't want them to.

**The folk:** Markovia has no folk, only the beast men created by Markov, and travelers should not linger here, lest they become permanent residents themselves. Lord Markov believes visitors are gifts from the dark powers—more raw parts for his creations. He attempts to seize and preserve the bodies of anyone who enters his domain. Through surgical grafting and hormonal injections, he transforms them into beast men. He uses no anesthesia, so the transformation and its pain leave most beast men simple-minded or mad.

The beast men pursue a crude existence as hunters and gatherers. Most obey Markov's orders without question. They fear him and believe he is a god. Markov encourages this false belief.

**Encounters:** Roll for an encounter twice, both day and night; the chance is always 50%. Most encounters involve beast men. They have standing orders to bring all intruders to Markov's estate. (They do not bother the Vistani, however.) The beast men initially try to seize intruders peacefully, by simply inviting them to Markov's estate. If this fails, they resort to violence.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Beast men | Bear |
| Snakes | Boar |
| Spiders | Deer |
| Wolves | Mountain lions |

## Mordent

**The lord and the law:** The ghost of Lord Godefroy controls Mordent, though few natives know it. They see him as an unfortunate part of the local scene and an evil creature to be avoided, but they do not associate him with rulership or law. Politically, the mayor of Mordentshire is most powerful. He is supported by a police force of 1st-level warriors who typically wear leather armor and carry footman's maces.

**The land:** Mordent's western shore borders the Sea of Sorrows. Sheer cliffs overlook the turbulent sea, though few exceed 150 feet in height. The beaches are rocky; in most places the waves break over boulders, erupting into spray. Behind the cliffs, the land stretches into great expanses of forest or rolls gently, becoming moor. A few small pockets of land lie below sea level.

The Arden River flows north through Mordent until it nears Mordentshire, the domain's only major settlement. There, near the center of the coastline, the river turns abruptly and empties into the Arden Bay. The town, located high on a chalky cliff, overlooks the quiet harbor. Mordentshire boasts a population of about 2,000 people.

Two noteworthy estates are located near Mordentshire: the House on Gryphon Hill and Heather House. Locals know the House on Gryphon Hill as the haunting grounds of Lord Godefroy. It is an evil place filled with terrible creatures. Heather House is the Weathermay family estate. This family owns most of the land directly southwest of town.

**Closing the borders:** The Ravenloft Mists lie only a few hundred yards out to sea. They obscure the horizon and make every sunset dazzling. At Lord Godefroy's request, the Mists roll in from the waters and hug the coastline. At other borders the Mists rise from the soil of Mordent itself, completely sealing the domain. Characters who enter these Mists will discover that every route leads back to Mordent.

**The folk:** Mordent's natives are of every size and color, but all are human. Laborers in Mordentshire are mostly fishermen, taut and lean from their work. The sea is their livelihood, and they reserve respect for those who also make their living from the sea. Peasants who reside away from the village tend to be herders.

Nearly everyone in Mordentshire knows the

House on Gryphon Hill is haunted. They believe strongly in ghosts and other creatures from "the other side" (with good reason), and they're highly superstitious. But they don't think such creatures could invade their own homes. As the local saying goes, "Don't visit evil, and it won't visit you."

Most folk are well mannered and friendly toward strangers, yet they remain polite, reserved, and often secretive. Mordentish folk are masters of verbal evasion. They'll chat for hours about meaningless trivia, but they'll rarely answer a personal question or one of substance. When a storyteller is pressed into action, he or she will usually share an old tale about an alchemist in Mordentshire who invented an *Apparatus* in centuries past. Some say the device could take the soul from any being and cast it into oblivion, or even implant it in another body. (Mordentish parents often scare their children with this version or teasingly say, "You can't be my child. The *Apparatus* must have sent you.") Others claim the *Apparatus* can separate the good and evil in a person, creating two individuals. The *Apparatus* supposedly was destroyed, but no one knows for sure. Most natives believe the entire tale is fiction. (See page 125 in *Realm of Terror* for more details on the *Apparatus*.)

**Encounters:** No incidental encounters with monsters occur in or around Mordentshire. This does not include the forests near the town, just the town itself and the nearby farmlands. (Encounters in town may include Vistani, strange folk, or ordinary animals, however.) In contrast, the Gryphon Hill area is teeming with horrid creatures, especially undead (excluding vampires and liches).

The table below lists common creatures in Mordent. Away from Gryphon Hill by day, characters have a 25% chance of encountering a beast from this list; after nightfall the chance doubles. On or near the infamous hill there is a 20% chance for an encounter, twice each day. Each night on Gryphon Hill, encounters occur every hour.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Ghouls | Any undead |
| Haunts | Bats |
| Lycanthropes | Geists |
| Poltergeists | Hags |
| Shadows | Imps |
| Snakes | Sahuagin |
| Spiders | Will o' wisps |

Mordent is the setting for the adventure module *Howls in the Night* (9466).

## Nova Vaasa

**The lord and the law:** Malken, alter ego of Sir Tristen Hiregaard, is lord of Nova Vaasa. To all appearances, Sir Hiregaard is merely a noble, but an unfortunate curse transforms him into the hideous fiend called Malken. This beastly man has terrorized many poor young women and murdered the men who crossed him, yet not even the woman who loves Sir Hiregaard suspects the truth about him.

The political leader of this domain is Prince Othmar. His city militia includes 1st-level fighters equipped with ring mail and clubs.

**The land:** Nova Vaasa lies in the crook of the Balinok Mountains, on the east side of the Core. Next to the Balinoks the terrain is rocky and steep, but it quickly spreads eastward into a vast, grassy plateau dotted with occasional rock outcroppings. Aside from the trees along the rivers, woods are scarce. Nearly a quarter of the land is devoted to farming. Wheat, oats, and rye are the principal crops. The soil is rocky, and fields cleared for farming are bordered by crude stone walls. Despite Nova Vaasa's relative youth on the calendar, many of the walls appear ancient. Abandoned, roofless stone huts mark the habitats of forgotten families. The huts are grouped in a circle and ringed by low walls of stone.

Even newer buildings in Nova Vaasa are commonly made of stone. Nova Vaasan lumber often rots in just a few years. As a result,

timber for construction is usually imported from other domains.

The city of Kantora lies near the center of Nova Vaasa. It rivals Lekar and Il Aluk in size, with 16,000 people living in rather squalid conditions. The smaller towns of Liara, Egertus, Bergovitsa, and Arbora house between 2,000 and 8,000 people.

The domain is known for its horses. Many of them run wild, particularly along the eastern ranges that spread out flat to the horizon in grassy plains. Herds of 20 to 50 black steeds thunder across the open range, spirited and free. The best mounts in Ravenloft come from Nova Vaasan bloodlines. By night the stampeding of horses continues across the flats, yet some claim that herds of nightmares replace the mortal creatures of the day.

**Closing the borders:** The dual nature of Sir Hiregaard/Malken makes it impossible to close the borders of Nova Vaasa. While Malken might wish to seal his domain, his Hiregaard half refuses to acknowledge the evil within himself; apparently, he lacks the mental focus to accomplish the task because of this. (Hiregaard, of course, lives in denial of his status as lord.) However, should anyone incur the wrath of Malken, he will hire assassin that will dog the offender throughout Ravenloft, until he or she returns to Nova Vaasa to settle unfinished business or otherwise gives Malken satisfaction.

**The folk:** Nova Vaasa is sharply divided into a small aristocracy, impoverished masses, and a vague middle class consisting of tax collectors, merchants, and clever thugs. Vice and violence are rampant among the settlements, and each town has an inordinate number of gambling houses and taverns.

**Encounters:** On the plains of Nova Vaasa, the traveler is bound to see thundering herds of sleek black horses, perhaps as many as 40 or 50 following the lead stallion. After dark the nightmares take their turn at running across the open expanses, and the very unlucky may find themselves faced with 10 or 20 of the evil creatures.

A once-beloved student of Hiregaard, Desmond LaRouche, wanders the plains of Nova Vaasa as a crazed half-golem. His crime was discovering the dual identity of the man he worshiped. His story is told in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).

Most other encounters are with bandits and men bent on mayhem. The only serious predators are the plains cats. These black tailless creatures live in the crevices of granite outcroppings and hunt on the plains by night. The females hunt in prides, dragging down horses or other sizeable mammals. The chance for an encounter is 25%, once during the day and twice during the night.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Horses | Jermlaine |
| Plains cats | Lycanthropes |
| Snakes | Nightmares |
| | Wolves |

The adventure module *The Awakening* (9452) is set in the domain of Nova Vaasa.

## Richemulot

**The lord and the law:** Jacqueline Renier, a wererat, rules this domain. Most folk don't know wererats infest the land, but those who do cannot say who among the creatures is leader.

**The land:** Richemulot has three large towns: Pont-a-Museau, Ste. Ronges, and Mortigny. At least a third of the buildings in each settlement lie empty or in ruins. Fourteen thousand people live in Pont-a-Museau, but the city

# 1: DOMAINS OF THE CORE

could house nearly 20,000 comfortably—much of the city is boarded up and infested with all manner of vermin. Similarly, about 6,000 folk inhabit the once-grand city of Ste. Ronges, leaving homes for another 12,000 citizens vacant. Mortigny has the largest current population, with 7,000 natives. If the buildings are any indication, another 5,000 folk once lived there.

Richemulot's settlements are known for their finely constructed sewer systems. The wererats live in these labyrinthine tunnels.

**Closing the borders:** When Jacqueline wants to seal her domain, a horde of giant rats surges from every dark corner and shadow, forming a border at least 50 feet thick These monsters literally hang from trees if there is no more space to occupy on the ground. Creatures who would fly over them find that the air does not support them, and they sink slowly into the throng of rending teeth unless they turn back immediately.

**The folk:** Every family in Richemulot inhabits a large home or series of buildings—as much as they can fill comfortably. Most edifices have fallen into ruin or disrepair. The people of Richemulot are not possessive about the things they own—whatever they have was abandoned by someone before them.

**Encounters:** Richemulot is not a safe place to wander alone. During the day, the chance for an encounter is 50%. Roll once for a group of player characters. If a character is alone or has just one companion, roll for two encounters each day. At night roll twice, with a 50% chance for average groups. If one or two people venture out alone after dark, roll three times instead.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Goblins | Berbalangs |
| Rats | Cloakers |
| Snakes | Lycanthropes |
| Spiders | Skeletons |
| Wererats | Wights |
| | Zombies |

## The Sea of Sorrows

**The lord and the law:** Captain Pieter van Riese, master of the *Relentless*, is the lord and prisoner of the Sea of Sorrows. Once an explorer, merchant, and privateer, Captain van Riese is cursed to sail the seas of Ravenloft forever as a hateful ghost.

The Sea of Sorrows is not an organized realm and has no acknowledged ruler among the land dwellers of Ravenloft. In fact, several coastal domains claim the shores of the sea as their territorial waters, and the lords of those domains would all claim the entire sea as their own. The truth of the matter is that Van Riese is the true lord and master of that watery domain.

**The land:** The Sea of Sorrows is a mist-haunted body of water whose borders shift constantly. Although its coasts remain unchanged, no one can say for certain how far it extends from the lands of the Core. Some people believe that if one sails far enough, the Misty Border may give way to the swirling gray fog of the Ethereal Plane. The waters of the Sea of Sorrows are bitter, stormy, and cold. Dense fogs constantly shroud the surface, and terrifying nor'westers can materialize without warning. It's a rare day when a lookout can see more than a mile ahead of the ship, and no one can truthfully say they've seen the sun or stars out there.

The fogs of the Sea are extraordinarily thick and clammy. When a ship sails into a fog bank, time seems to stop. The silence is unnerving, as the mist deadens all sound and chills voyagers to the bone. Visibility is reduced to a few yards, forcing all sailing vessels to drift helplessly at the mercy of the winds and currents.

There are a few scattered islands hidden in the mists of the Sea of Sorrows. Markovia lies somewhere in its western reaches, and some islands belong to no lord, but are part of the Sea itself. There also is a rumor of a shadowy domain called Graben, some 75 miles off the coast of Lamordia, but reports of it are sketchy. (Interested explorers should consult the adventure module *Ship of Horror* [9321].) Few landings have ever been recorded on any of these isles, and it is extremely unusual to encounter the same island twice, no matter how long one searches for it. Most seafarers keep the coasts of the Core in sight when sailing on the sea.

The ever-shifting center of the domain is *Relentless* herself. Wherever she and her doomed master sail, the treacherous fogs and currents follow.

**Closing the borders:** Pieter van Riese can close the borders of the domain by causing an impenetrable fog to arise, becalming any vessel trying to leave. Flyers sink slowly into the rough, shark-infested waters.

**The folk:** The Sea of Sorrows has no native human inhabitants, but mariners from Lamordia, Darkon, Dementlieu, and Valachan often brave the dangerous waters. Fishermen, sealers, and traders ply the sea between those realms in small numbers. Most never leave sight of land, and those who do rarely report what lies beyond the horizon.

**Encounters:** Native creatures of the Sea of Sorrows are scarce. Seals, whales, and schools of cold-water fish are hunted by daring captains. The mariners of the coastal domains have an unwritten code of nonaggression on the sea; all seafarers are brothers in the face of such a treacherous and changeable ocean.

The most terrifying encounter on the Sea of Sorrows is a sighting of the *Relentless*, Van Riese's ghost ship. It is said that any ship unfortunate enough to meet the *Relentless* will never return to port again.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Fog banks | Bowlyns |
| Nor'westers | Lacedons |
| Seals | Giant squids |
| Whales | Marine spiders |
| | Sea snakes |

## Sithicus

**The lord and the law:** Lord Soth, a death knight, rules Sithicus with reluctance. He is originally from Krynn. The blue warrior Kitiara is his dark, private passion. Lured by what he believed to be her voice, Soth stepped through a dimensional rift and found himself in Ravenloft. (See products in the DRAGONLANCE® campaign setting to learn more about Soth's life on Krynn, and read the novel *Knight of the Black Rose* [8057] to learn the whole story of how he came to rule in Ravenloft.)

**The land:** Sithicus lies in the southwest region of the Core, east of Valachan and south of Verbrek and Invidia. The terrain is thickly forested, with many rifts and small cliffs. The lowlands are filled with bubbling springs and shallow pools.

Soth's castle, Nedragaard Keep, is hidden between two arms of an eerie ridge. The castle is a gift from the dark powers of the land. It resembles his own Dargaard Keep on Krynn. He is joined by the shadows of spirits and undead warriors who also haunted his castle on Krynn.

**Closing the borders:** On Krynn the death knight was compelled to remember his sins each night in song. In Ravenloft he can seal his borders by repeating this dismal ballad. As he sings, he is joined by the voices of other sinners. The sound, rising from the borders, is so horrid that no mortal can withstand it. All must return to Sithicus or fall hopelessly mad.

**The folk:** All natives of Sithicus are elves. They welcome other races, but most visitors cannot bear to remain. Soth despises the elves because it was they who deceived him and led him to his loss of honor on Krynn. Sithicans feel bound to the land, but they don't understand why. Even the most tormented of them stay in this domain, partially because they know other lands will not tolerate their race.

According to legend, a dark-haired human woman roams the hills at night. The elves claim it is Kitiara, come to torment Lord Soth. Ever desirous of possessing her, he hopes the same.

**Encounters:** Most creature encounters involve banshees and other undead. There is a 33% chance for one incidental encounter during the day, and the same chance three times during the night.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Banshees | Any undead |
| Deer | Lycanthropes |
| Snakes | Wolves |

## Tepest

**The lord and the law:** Three hags rule Tepest together, forming the only known triumvirate leadership of a domain. The hags represent each of the types described in the *Monstrous Manual*. The people know of them only through legend and myth. Their long, sad story is recounted in the game accessory *Darklords* (9331).

**The land:** Tepest is nestled in the Balinok Mountains directly south of Keening and Darkon. The Timori Road (which used to cross the mountains of Ravenloft, but now dead-ends at the Shadow Rift) crosses Tepest from east to west. Near the center of the domain, the road hugs the southern shore of Lake Kronov. The lake's clear waters never freeze completely, though snow and ice cling to the surrounding peaks more than half the year. The village of Viktal lies on the east end of the lake. The town of Kellee lies 25 miles east on the Timori Road.

**Closing the borders:** When the hags want their borders sealed, a violent storm encircles the domain. Stinging rain, snow, and bolts of lightning drive travelers inland, toward the lake. Magic does not affect the bizarre storm.

**The folk:** Viktal and Kellee each house about 3,000 people. The folk are simple and poor, living in small whitewashed cottages roofed with bundles of twigs. As a matter of pride, they carefully adorn the cottage walls with bright, intricate floral patterns. In summer the window boxes overflow with blossoms.

Viktalians herd goats and sheep, hunt bear and wild boar, or fish for sturgeon on the lake. Caviar is a local delicacy, reserved for special occasions. The people of Kellee also herd and hunt. Their goats wear bells, and as the herders guide their animals home at dusk, the gentle haunting clangs echo across the valley.

Tepestanis are a superstitious lot, believing in "little beasties" and evil spirits that kidnap wicked people. When night falls, the doors shut tight. The folk even lock up their herds in circular, roofed stables made of timber and twigs. The wood in this domain burns poorly, with a lot of smoke; hence dried animal dung often fuels a fire.

**Encounters:** There are two creatures in Tepest of whom wanderers must beware (aside from the three hags). First, those who walk under the night sky may have the misfortune to meet Jugo Hesketh, one of Petrovna's chief inquisitors, who has been transformed into a particularly evil and powerful ghast. Second, those who travel southwest of Lake Kronov will enter the dire forest of Blackroot, an evil treant with particularly terrible powers. Both beings are fully described in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).

Goblins are common in these parts. Fortunately, the voracious appetite of the hags keeps their numbers in check. Unfortunately, the hags also hunger for human and demihuman flesh. During the day, roll once for an encounter; the chance is 50%. Roll twice after dark, but the percentage stays the same. If characters venture into remote areas, double the number of rolls.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Deer | Bear |
| Goblins | Kelpies |
| | Snakes |
| | Wolves |

## Valachan

**The lord and the law:** The Baron Urik von Kharkov, a vampire lord, rules this domain. He is a nosferatu vampire roughly 250 years old. Once exiled to the Ethereal Plane, Urik wandered for decades until at last, weak and anemic, he stumbled through the Mists and into Ravenloft. Uniquely, he takes the animal form of a panther, not a wolf. His full story is told in the game accessory *Darklords* (9331).

**The land:** Valachan (pronounced *VAHL a kon*) is a rugged, forested domain in the southwestern corner of the Core. Its ridges and numerous small canyons make overland travel difficult. Common wildlife includes deer, moose, boar, martens, eagles, and ravens. Bear and panthers also live in the woods.

There are three towns of notable size: Ungrad, population 1,500; Rotwald, 4,000; and Habelnik, 3,500. The Baron's fortress, Castle Pantara, lies between Rotwald and Habelnik. The dark castle is couched on a cliff above the main road, like the animal for which it's named.

**Closing the borders:** When Baron von Kharkov wants to seal his domain, the forests become pathless. Characters who enter the woods become disoriented as they fight their way through ever-thickening underbrush. After an exhausting effort, the would-be escapees find themselves still in Valachan. Those who try to fly over the trees are mercilessly attacked and driven back by hordes of bats.

**The folk:** Valachani natives frequently suffer from *White Fever*, a mild flu that develops at night and leaves its victims listless and bedridden for several days—or so they believe. In truth the feedings of Urik and his vampire slaves cause this common complaint. The Baron rarely kills his victims. Though his appetite is vast, he prefers to bleed several victims conservatively each night rather than drain one or two to death. He imposes the same restraint on his vampiric slaves.

The folk recognize the Baron as their lord and ruler. He does not tax them harshly, but often summons them to work in his keep at night. The work is harsh, and laborers usually return home with a case of White Fever.

Once per year the Baron demands that a young woman leave her family and become his bride. She rarely lives out the year. The people assume that she either kills herself or dies from his abuse. The truth is far worse.

**Encounters:** The chance for an encounter is 25%, twice during the day and four times at night. Panthers are the primary predator.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Bats | Any undead |
| Boar | Bear |
| Deer or moose | Panthers |
| Vampires | Spiders |

## Verbrek

**The lord and the law:** Alfred Timothy the werewolf is lord of Verbrek. He hates humans, demihumans, and other types of lycanthropes.

**The land:** Verbrek has gained territory since the Grand Conjunction collapsed. The domain of Arkandale, whose lord was Alfred's father Timothy, became part of Verbrek after that event (Nathan Timothy still pilots a boat on the Musarde River, but he is no longer a darklord; see his biography in Chapter III.) Although the physical shape and size of Verbrek has changed, the terrain remains largely the same.

The domain is a patchwork of woods, marsh, and meadow on a rolling terrain. The forests are mostly deciduous, including oak, quaking aspen, and flowering dogwood. The clearings are dotted with thorny shrubs and carpeted with deep, emerald grasses. In autumn, as the leaves drop, the shrubbery bark turns to deep crimson and the grass turns to gold. A ground fog settles in the hollows at night. Wild game is abundant, especially wolves, and weasels are prized for their rich pelts. The Musarde River flows into the realm from Invidia and continues

on its way to Richemulot and points beyond. A few scattered villages lie near its banks. The area around each village has been cleared for farming.

In a clearing near the southern borders of the domain stands a circle of roughly hewn stones, each twice the height of a man. Natives call it simply *the Circle.*

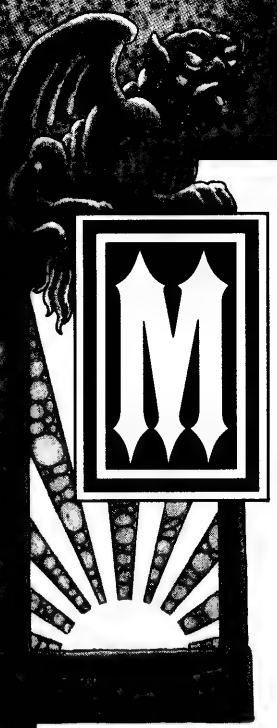
**Closing the borders:** Alfred Timothy cannot seal his domain completely. To prevent escape, he summons a large group of wolves and werewolves to patrol the borders.

**The folk:** The villages along the Musarde contain human populations. They live in small, sturdy wooden houses with thatched roofs. Despite the abundant game in the forests, they do not hunt much. A few are trappers, but most are peasants or artisans who sell their goods to Nathan Timothy. The rest of the domain is overrun by werewolves, particularly those areas near the Circle. They are the only large carnivores in this domain. On the full moon following each solstice and equinox, the packs meet at the Circle. At this time they celebrate the hunt, settle legal issues, perform marriages, and trade with each other.

The werewolves of Verbrek tolerate the Vistani and anyone in their charge. Any traveler who enters uninvited, or without a Vistani escort, becomes game, meaning both "prey" and "entertainment." Those caught by the werewolves are stripped all possessions and informed that they have half an hour to run. When the time expires, the werewolves begin the hunt. If the prey can make it to the border before the creatures catch up, he or she lives. In the interest of sport, the creatures may grant extra time to a victim whose ability to flee is obviously poor. Then again, they may not.

**Encounters:** Most of the dangerous encounters in Verbrek involve werewolves. A few undead creatures also inhabit the domain—all of them immaterial, such as ghosts, spectres, or geists.

# II: ISLANDS OF TERROR



Many domains of Ravenloft float independently in the Misty Border, forming isolated pockets of terror. Each is permanently surrounded by mist and has no physical link to any other domain. Nine of them are described in the following pages, but there are actually more, some known, some yet undiscovered (see the game accessories *Islands of Terror* [9348] and *Darklords* [9331], as well as adventure modules like *The Created* [9414] for various examples of island domains). The realms described in this chapter are pictured as a group on one of the color maps in this boxed set, but their position on the sheet is arbitrary. No sailor in the vast sea of Mists could chart a course to these islands, nor would any sane sailor try.

The text of this chapter follows the format of the previous chapter. Refer to "The Domains in Detail" (on page 5) for explanatory notes.

## Bluetspur

**The lord and the law:** The rulership of this domain is uncertain. Visitors who escaped the land learned only that mind flayers dwell beneath the mountains, so it is assumed that the lord is an illithid god-brain.

**The land:** Before the Grand Conjunction, Bluetspur was an unearthly domain in the southeastern corner of the Core. After the cataclysmic event the realm was recaptured by the Mists, but it became a free-floating island. Aside from that detail, the geography of Bluetspur remains largely the same. The mountains here, once the southern range of the Balinoks, are sharply twisted and warped. Massive spurs of rock jut from the peaks at impossible angles, defying gravity. Stone arches bridge the summits, and corkscrew spires rise from the rock as if they were violently driven up through the surface. Mounts Grysl and Makab top out at nearly 10,000 feet.

There is no sun in this land, and therefore no proper day or night as most people think of it. However, the entire horizon glows with the ruddy hue of dusk, casting a reddish tint over the land and constituting "day." When "night" falls, the sky becomes completely black, and lightning begins to strike with electrifying frequency. Those who remain under the open skies cannot hope to survive.

On the other hand, those who take shelter underground, where the mind flayers live, cannot hope for much better. . . .

Numerous streams drain from the sides of the mountains, flowing across the foothills and into the Mists. The streams carve deep, spectacular gorges through the rock, which expand into narrow canyons.

Vegetation is almost unknown in Bluetspur, even along the streams, due to the absence of sunlight (and the hostile nocturnal atmosphere). A few species of sticky fungi grow in the crevices at lower elevations, but the land is otherwise barren and stony.

**Closing the borders:** The closure of this domain never has been witnessed—at least it has never been reported, so no one knows how or if this might occur. Physical accesses to the mind flayers' underground colony are rumored to seal with rock, trapping victims inside.

**The folk:** No people live above ground, but the illithids control the caverns beneath the mountains.

**Encounters:** The High Master Illithid of Bluetspur has been conducting experiments with the help of Lyssa von Zarovich, a distant and equally undead relative of the infamous count, and they have inadvertently spawned a race of vampire illithids. These abominations were introduced in the adventure module *Thoughts of Darkness* (9364), and they are rabidly insane monsters, yet one of them has retained enough of its intelligence to become

even more dangerous. Its name is Athaekeetha, and it is featured in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).

The living mind flayers appear at the surface only occasionally. They always attempt to subdue visitors and add them to a slave pool. Otherwise, no encounters occur above ground; not even small animals live in this barren domain.

Each night spent in Bluetspur brings horrid nightmares. The dreamer imagines dark, foul creatures slinking out from the rock and devouring all that is good. A horror check is required when the character awakes.

## Dominia

**The lord and the law:** Dr. Dominiani, also known as Daclaud Heinfroth, is a scientist and vampire who has a special taste for cerebral fluid. His victims are left mad and thence become permanent inmates of his asylum-domain.

Dominiani was a vassal of Duke Gundar, lord of Gundarak (a domain directly west of Barovia before the Grand Conjunction). In the year 735 of the Barovian calendar, the two of them plotted to overthrow the darklord Harkon Lukas so that Dominiani could take his place and rule the domain of Kartakass. A group of wandering adventurers became involved in the intrigue along the way, and the whole plot fell apart due to their actions and a few deft moves on the part of Harkon Lukas himself (see 9298—*Feast of Goblyns*).

When it was all over, Gundar attempted to murder the adventurers for their part in foiling his schemes, luring them into his clutches by rendering himself vulnerable while secretly depending on Dominiani to spring a trap—Gundar foolishly believed that he held unmitigated control over his vampire slave. As the snare unfurled, however, the servile doctor realized that the death of his lord would free him from servitude and leave him in control of Gundarak. Therefore, he withheld his hand and Duke Gundar fell, astonished, under the stake and holy symbol.

Dr. Dominiani immediately assumed the lordship of Gundar, but as a relatively young vampire with peculiar and specific interests, he was ill-equipped to assume the power of the patriarch before him. For the most part he continued to run his asylum in the south of Gundar, squandering his authority in the pursuit of more inmates to feed upon. In the end, it was his sadistic reign of terror over the helplessly, hopelessly mad that drew the attention of the dark powers.

After the Grand Conjunction collapsed, Dominiani was seized and drawn back into the Demiplane of Dread, yet his inability (or perhaps his unwillingness) to govern an entire domain resulted in his gaining control of nothing more than a tiny island of terror. His asylum, its fenced-in grounds, and a small patch of wolf-infested forest became the realm of Dominia.

His "orderlies" are *fledgling* vampires (see *Van Richten's Guide to Vampires* [9345]) who walk the hallways of the asylum and patrol the woods in groups of two to three.

**The land:** Dominia is a tiny island. The asylum rests at its center, surrounded by an acre of neatly-kept grounds and a high stone wall with broken glass embedded into every inch of it. Wolves course through the forest outside the fence, always on the brink of starvation.

Should an intrepid escapee somehow evade the orderlies, scale the wall, and outrun the wolves, he or she will find that most edges of the island abruptly fall into the depthless Mists—where one might end up if he or she leaps off is unknown. To the south, however, the runner comes upon a set of cliffs with a sheer drop of 500 feet to jagged rocks below. Those who somehow reach the foot of this extremely stony bluff alive may be safe from the wolves, but Dominiani's orderlies will not be far behind. . . .

**Closing the borders:** When Dominiani wants to seal his domain, the borders of his island fall under an absolute blackness, a barrier of void. Those who enter the nothingness suffer 1d10 points of frostbite damage until they withdraw, but there is a 5% chance each round that they may become disoriented and lose the way back.

**The folk:** The only mortals in Dominia are patients in the asylum. When the Mists carry unlucky travelers into that domain, they are quickly tracked by wolves and may foolishly be relieved when Dominiani's orderlies come to the rescue. From there they are taken to the asylum, where their competence is regularly "evaluated" by the doctor.

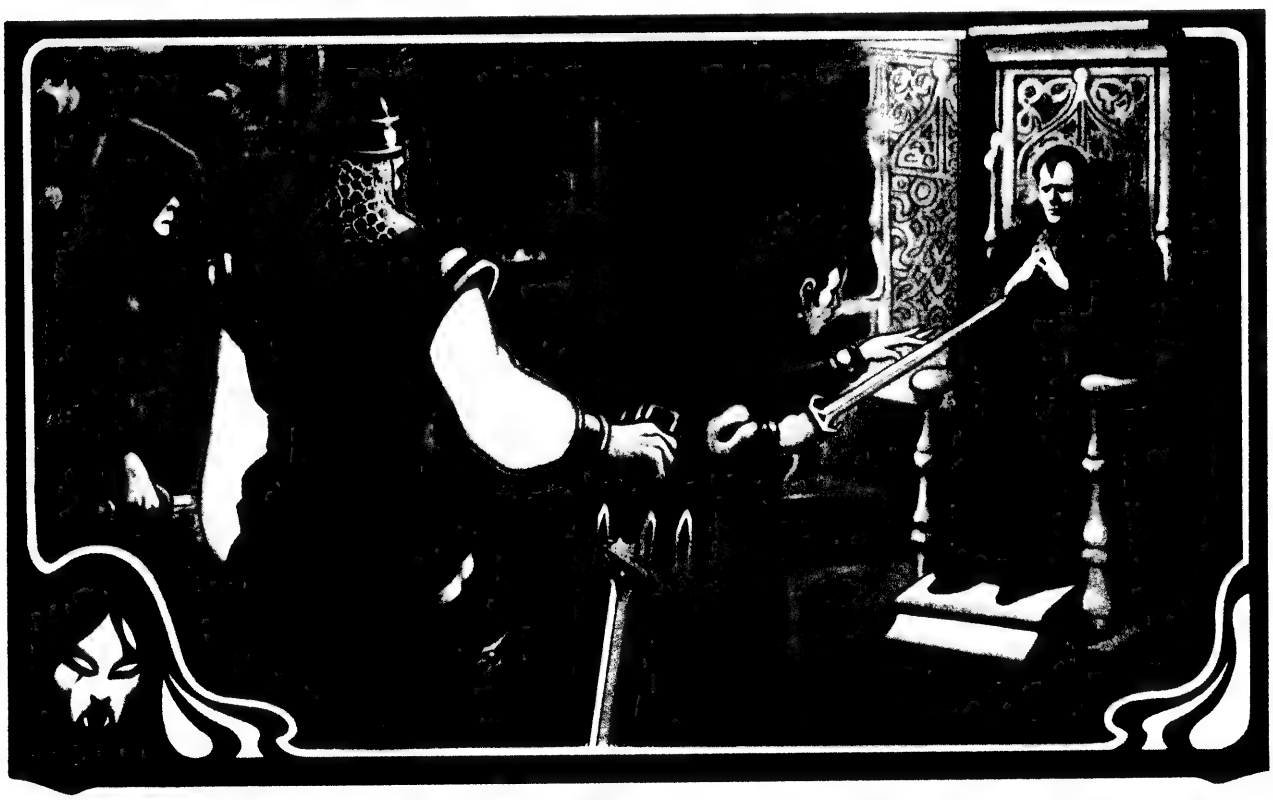
**Encounters:** Player characters outside the grounds have a 50% chance per turn to encounter 1d8 + 2 wolves. Patrolling vampire orderlies, initially in bat form, will always come to investigate the characteristic growl of wolves on the hunt.

## G'Henna

**The lord and the law:** Yagno Petrovna, high priest of the imaginary beast-god Zhakata, rules G'Henna. He is both the spiritual and the political leader of the domain. The priesthood controls most aspects of society.

Captive "criminals" (those Yagno deems displeasing to Zhakata) are turned into mongrelmen when Yagno performs a ceremony on the high towers of his cathedral. He strips his victims of their human dignity, which is distilled into great clouds of glittering dust. As the winds carry the dust away, all that remains of the victim is a mongrelman and an outcast. If the infraction is especially severe, Yagno's henchmen toss the creature from the tower.

Loyal citizens think of Yagno's mongrelmen as animals. The creatures' own families treat them no better than curs—or had better do so, lest they suffer the same horrid transformation. As a result, most mongrels flee into the



wilderness, residing in caves among the rocks and living as best they can. At night, travelers often can spot their campfires and hear their eerie songs of lament. To this date, no foreigner has suffered this atrocious transformation. Perhaps Yagno lacks to power to do it—no one is sure.

**The land:** G'Henna used to rest near the center of the Core, just south of Darkon, but since the Grand Conjunction it has become an island of terror. The land remains rocky, cold, and dry. Peasants struggle to grow crops of any kind, and herd animals continually roam in search of adequate grazing land. In winter many animals starve.

Several rivers flow across G'Henna from its highlands. In spring the waters flood the banks. In other months only a thin, murky stream winds through dry beds. Trees grow along the rivers, but in the Outland, G'Henna's rugged wilderness, almost nothing but scrub survives.

The principal city in G'Henna is Zhukar, home to 10,000 people, located in the foothills near the heart of the domain. Buildings of worship dot the center of the city. Yagno's grand cathedral towers above them all.

Travelers in G'Henna frequently encounter dust storms that force them to take shelter, but mongrelmen never shy from these tempests. According to them, the winds carry their own lost dignity. When the storms die and the sun begins to set, the skies are aflame with color.

**Closing the borders:** When Yagno wants to seal his domain, a wall of jeering animal skulls appears before any character within 100 feet of the border. The wall extends into the heavens. No amount of magic or muscle can move it. As soon as the character heads back into G'Henna, the wall disappears.

**The folk:** G'Hennan natives are pale and thin. Most have sparse black hair that grows in clumps. The men wear beards if they can, using wax to twist them into a single long strand. Esteemed brethren of the church wear garish colors, particularly red, but the peasants uniformly wear drab rags.

All aspects of G'Hennan life revolve around the worship of Zhakata. Worshiping this god is an exercise in extreme sacrifice. All food that's grown or imported must go to the church, which offers the food to Zhakata. The leftovers are doled out by the priests, determining who shall feast and who shall starve. (Priests are always well fed.) Starvation is considered an honorable death because it proves one's devotion to Zhakata. Those families who would find favor with the god must choose one of their members to starve to death in homage while the rest eat.

A typical home is filled with religious artifacts. The *guesting cup,* a drinking vessel offered to all visitors, is made from the skull of the family member who willingly starved for Zhakata. Vertebrae and finger bones create floral patterns over the doors and above beds, reminding the living of the "thrice-blessed dead" and bringing good luck. None of these things is obvious to the uninitiated, though, since the bones are filed and polished until they gleam like ivory.

G'Hennans are generally happy with their lot since it is all they know. They treat visitors politely, provided the outsiders adhere to Zhakatan etiquette. Fasting is expected.

**Encounters:** Most encounters in G'Henna are with humans and mongrelmen, not unintelligent monsters. Humans belong to three categories: priests, worshipers, and blasphemers. Priests are 1st-level characters who are equipped with leather armor, daggers, and scourges. They kill or enslave blasphemers, or give them to Yagno, who transforms them into mongrelmen. Worshipers report blasphemers to the priests. Blasphemers run from everyone.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Bats | Ghouls |
| Great cats | Giant insects |
| Mongrelmen | Kobolds |
| Snakes | Lycanthropes |
| | Wolves |

## Har'Akir

**The lord and the law:** An ancient mummy, the pharaoh Anhktepot, is the evil lord of this domain. His tomb lies in a small canyon guarded by two monolithic statues. Those who would learn more of this dread lord should consult the game accessory *Darklords* (9331).

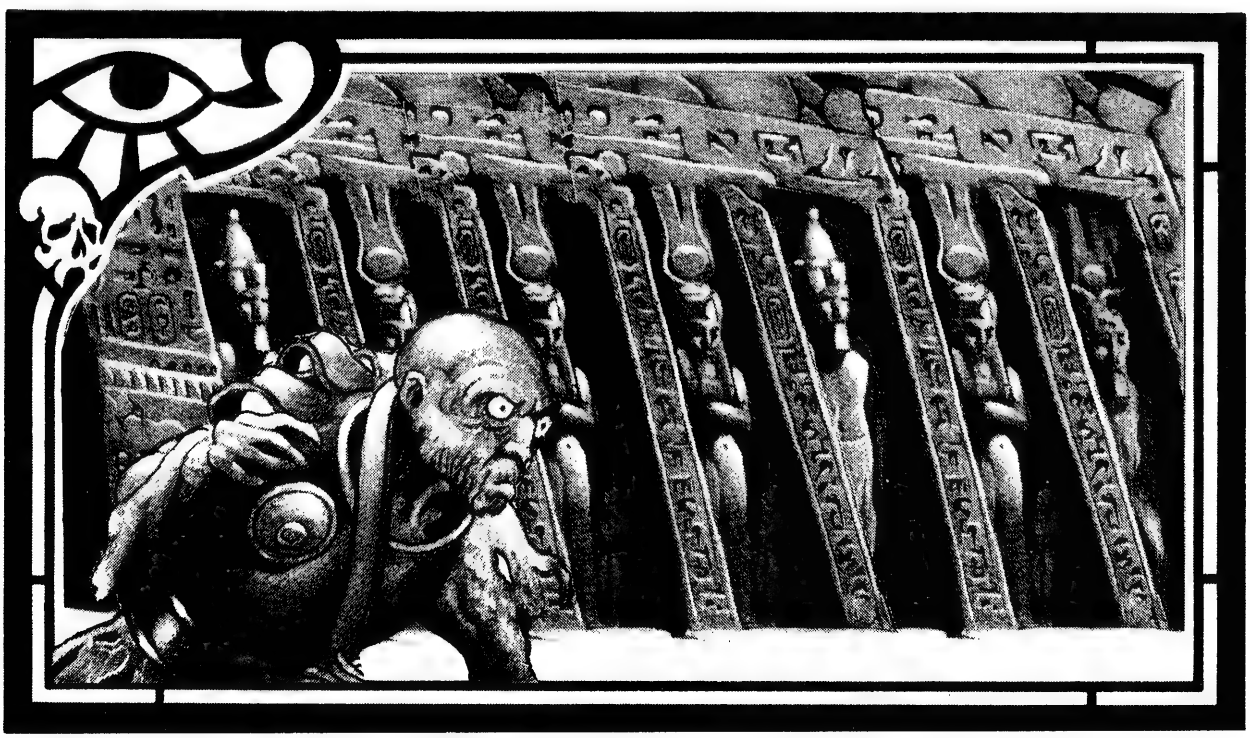
Har'Akir is a small, searing-hot desert floating in the Mists. Sandy expanses stretch across the southern part of the domain while rocky, barren cliffs cover the north. The Mists hover above the land in a shimmering mass, blurring the horizon. To the parched observer it seems that the desert goes on forever.

Har'Akir has a single settlement, Muhar, which lies beside a small spring-fed pond. Fewer than 100 people live in large cabanas by the pond. All natural vegetation has been stripped from the area.

**Closing the borders:** When Anhktepot wants to seal his domain, the borders radiate an impenetrable wall of heat. Travelers who attempt to withstand it turn to ash before they reach the other side.

**The folk:** Har'Akiri natives are small brown people whose faces are weathered and lined. They wear loose white robes to keep the heat at bay, and head cloths that can be drawn across the face when wind stirs the sand. They are wary of strangers, but are not hostile. Water is like gold to these folk, expensive and rare.

**Encounters:** Senmet, one of the so-called "children of Anhktepot" is a greater mummy who walks the burning sands, seeking to subvert the darklord's authority. Adventurers who delve into places where they are most-not welcome may find themselves facing this terrible creature or one of his brethren. Senmet is featured both in the adventure module *Touch of Death* (9338) and in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).



Few other monsters inhabit this domain. The indigenous species live in the rocky southern cliffs by day and wander the desert after nightfall. The desert is almost void of life, and the cliff creatures appear to have no natural prey. How they survive here in Har'Akir is a mystery.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Ant lions | Any undead |
| Jackals | Leopards |
| Sandlings | Lions |
| Scorpions | Snakes |

## The Nightmare Lands

**The lord and the law:** The Nightmare Lands allegedly have no lord. Who or whatever controls this domain is surely mad. Some sages speculate that this is a land of dreams, that the fleeting visions of the night retreat to this domain. They say that here the lines between relity and dreams are blurred, distorted—twisted into unreality.

**The land:** The terrain changes so quickly it can only be described as "alive." The sky changes color, the sun changes size, the air becomes hot and then cold. Each change is smooth, seamless, and tends to occur at the corner of the viewer's field of vision. The wilderness is truly trackless; no trail can form in such unstable country.

Plant life is unique, seeming to move against the wind at times. Animals howl and gibber as they race by. The few monsters in the Nightmare Lands are alien and weird.

**The folk:** Only the Abber nomads live in this domain, and their tribe is quite small. Unlike their surroundings, they appear stable and sane. They construct no buildings and own only what they can carry. They are hunters, armed primarily with spears and bows.

**Encounters:** Each encounter in the Nightmare Lands is a unique experience. There is a 25% chance for an encounter during the day and again at night.

## Rokushima Táiyoo

**The lord and the law:** The master of Rokushima is the ghost of Haki Shinpi, an ancient warrior who ruled with a savage blade when he lived.

**The land:** The name of this domain translates roughly as "Six Islands of the Sun," which might seem odd as the realm contains only four islands, but local scholars know that there were once two more islands which sank into the Dokyúumi (the Poison Sea) when the *shujin* (the leader) of each was killed.

Rokushima is unusual among the islands of terror because it truly *is* an island, or rather, a cluster of four. A disk of poisonous salty ocean, known as the Dokyúumi extends some 50 miles around the islands. No sailors voyage on this dreadful expanse of water, for its depths teem with the most hideous of monsters.

The four islands form a circle enclosing the Ookfi Kagamiko (the Great Mirror Lake), which is fed by springs as pure as any mountain stream. Gaps between the islands allow the water of this magnificent lake to cascade down a lengthy incline and into the surrounding sea, inexplicably turning to salt water as it falls. Three of these outlets rush over stretches of luminous coral filled with beautiful, darting fish. Visitors find the coral as jagged as glass, and the fish both ravenous and toxic. The western passage to the poisonous sea is a broad mouth set between ruined castles atop two mountainous ridges. This area is always filled with a thick bank of rolling white mist, called Warúi Yume Kasumi (the Nightmare Mists) Ships that enter those straits vanish forever.

Each of the islands is home to a sprawling city of wooden temples, stone gardens, and other elements of oriental beauty. The people of these villages are ruled from a great castle on the upper slopes of the island, where one of Shinpi's sons dwells.

The most impressive feature of Rokushima is the towering Yama Shimo (Mount Frost). This

snow-capped mountain rises some 8,000 feet over the churning waters of the poisonous sea. Rumors abound that there are strange and terrible creatures on its slopes, as well as fabulous treasures within its many caverns and caves, but none of the locals are brave enough to ascend this peak and investigate.

The weather is wildly variable. In the summer sweltering heat and oppressive humidity is the rule. With the coming of autumn, downpours and roaring winds buffet the islands. Winters see sheets of snow covering the land, and brutally cold temperatures freezing most of the Ookfi Kagamiko. Spring tends to be a mild season, with wild flowers blooming everywhere. Marriages always occur in the spring, as those held in other seasons are considered unlucky.

**Closing the borders:** When Shinpi wishes to seal his domain, savage winds whirl about the 1,000-foot–high cliffs that make up the outer coasts of the islands. Under the influence of these gusts, wooden structures are torn apart, climbing or flight becomes impossible, and anything thrown into this great vortex is forced back onto the islands.

**The folk:** The people of Rokushima are generally simple. They live on seafood, caught by the scores of fishermen who sail the Ookfi Kagamiko, and on crops raised on the terrace farms that cover these mountainous islands.

Each of the princes maintains a private army that is little more than a cadre of thugs and mercenaries. The common folk suffer under the abuses of these villains, but are powerless to do anything about it. Among the ranks of these armies, assassination and betrayal are common.

**Encounters:** The eastern vampire Mayónaka became a resident of Rokushima when it formed, sometime after the Grand Conjunction. He is described in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).

The mountainous nature of these islands makes large animals scarce. Wolves and foxes are the largest of the predators likely to be found here. From time to time, however, various supernatural creatures of the orient appear on the Six Islands. When this happens, almost any creature from the *Kara-tur* appendix of the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM (2116) may be encountered, as well as oriental vampires and the like.

## Souragne

**The lord and the law:** Anton Misroi, the zombie master, is lord of this domain.

**The land:** A slice of dry land covers the eastern side of Souragne, but the western two-thirds are a dark, swampy maze of waterways, winding through towering cypress draped with moss. Most of the swamp region is submerged. A few solid patches of land rise out of the water, but only a handful of folk know their location.

Souragne includes a sliver of water along its northern side—the land gives way to a band of saltwater before it meets the Mists a few miles offshore. A small town, Port d'Elhour, lies on the coastline east of the swamp.

**Closing the borders:** When Anton wants his borders sealed, the Mists direct travelers back into the domain. Any who enter the Misty Border find themselves back in Souragne.

**The folk:** Souragnien people are very superstitious. They believe in a variety of nature gods, including the "Lord of the Dead," who watches over the swamp. None of the villagers ventures into the swamp willingly, but it is rumored that some outcasts live in floating houses deep within it.

**Encounters:** The Voodan shaman Chicken Bone stalks the swamps of Souragne, commanding the walking dead and sending deathly sickness upon his enemies. He is fully described in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139).

Incidental encounters in the swamp include lower-level undead: skeletons, zombies, etc. Away from the swamp, such creatures are rare.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Crocodiles | Any undead |
| Leeches | Lizards |
| Giant insects | Shambling mounds |
| Snakes | Toads and frogs |
| | Will o' wisps |

## Sri Raji

**The lord and the law:** Lord Arijani rules this domain. He is a rakshasa, a creature often described as "the embodiment of nightmares." To the locals he appears human. They know him as the High Priest of Kali.

**The land:** Sri Raji is an isolated domain whose boundaries gently wave, creating small protrusions of land as well as intrusions of Mist. The Yamasha Mountains rise in the west. On the slopes of Mount Yamatali, the highest peak, sits a great temple called the Accursed City. In the valley below are three towns. The Sri Rajin climate is universally hot and muggy. A jungle covers the entire domain, excluding portions that have been cleared for agriculture. Rice patties surround the cities.

**Closing the borders:** When Arijani wants to seal his domain, a wall of phantasmal killers rises from the borders. The killers cannot be dispelled or disbelieved. Each creature acts in accordance with the *phantasmal killer* spell, but it attacks only those who are trying to leave.

**The folk:** The people are devout and fearful believers in their gods, particularly Kali. They believe that life in Ravenloft is divine punishment for a lack of true faith. According to tradition, the goddess demands that one of them relinquish his or her earthly bonds every day as proof of piety. They believe the victim leaves Sri Raji to commune with the powers. In reality, the victim is eaten by the rakshasa.

The society is rigidly divided into castes. Families are large and the towns are extremely crowded. (The Indian material in *Legends and Lore* (2108) is quite appropriate.)

**Encounters:** The weretiger Jahred prowls through the lush foliage of Sri Raji, ever plotting against Arijani. Jahred is featured both in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 2 (2139) and the adventure module *Web of Illusion* (9415). The jungle itself teems with life, much of it dangerous. Arijani rarely leaves his temple and should be encountered only as part of an adventure plot.

| Common | Rare |
|---|---|
| Giant insects | Carnivorous plants |
| Monkeys | Elephants |
| Snakes | Nagas |
| Spiders | Weretigers |

## Zherisia

**The lord and the law:** Sodo the doppleganger is lord of Zherisia. The people do not know who he is, but in hushed tones they discuss his frequent and grisly murders, which are committed with a surgical blade.

**The land:** The grimy city of Paridon lay in the center of this small domain before the Grand Conjunction, but afterwards the city became the entire domain. Food must be grown in small, sickly gardens, and starvation is rampant.

**Closing the borders:** The Mists seal this domain when Sodo desires it. Those entering them eventually find themselves back in Zherisia.

**The folk:** Hunger, disease, and crime are common here. The folk are divided into two classes: those with money and those without.

**Encounters:** Zherisia has no indigenous monsters. An undead creature or lycanthrope may occasionally visit the land, however, wandering out of the Mists. Some of the normal folk are considered monsters by those who know them well.

Lunatic murderers stalks the dark streets of Zherisia. One of them is featured in the adventure module *Hour of the Knife* (9456).

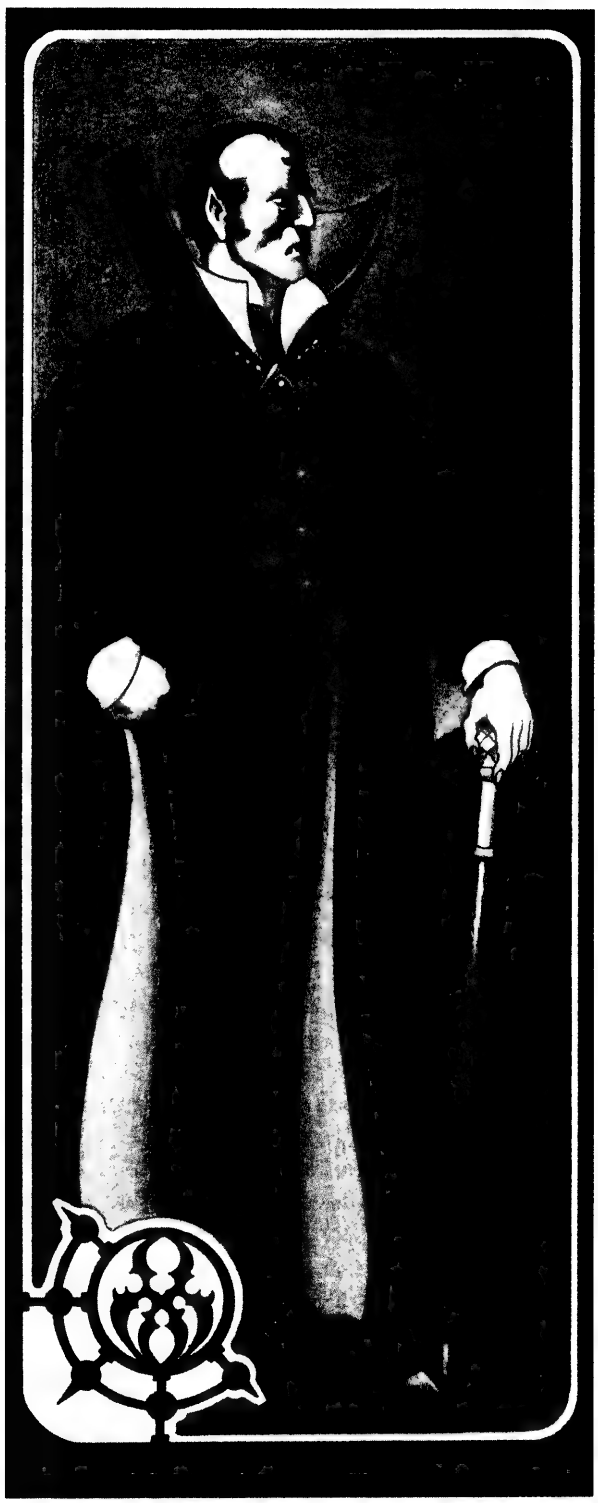
# III: THE WHO'S DOOMED OF RAVENLOFT

This chapter introduces the lords of Ravenloft. These are men, women, and creatures who have acquired power that they only dreamed of before they came to the Demiplane of Dread, but it has come at tremendous price, for each of them is also denied that which they desire more than anything else. The tale of Strahd von Zarovich and his futile quest to attain the love of Tatyana is well known, but every darklord has a story to tell, and none of them are happy.

Those Dungeon Masters who wish to create new domains of their own would do well to study this chapter first. The lord of each land is the very heart of the province, virtually its only reason for being. The terrain, the natives, the monsters, the effects of magic, and even the enemies of evil there are purely reflections of the being who presides over it all.

Ravenloft's villains are characters as well as creatures, with well-rounded personalities. They are not mindless killing machines, but tortured souls. Despite their decidedly dark nature, most still have a tiny kernel of goodness within; some small part of them should evoke sympathy or pity. Yes they are evil, and they must at least be stopped if not destroyed, but they are still human in some part—enough so that a kindly priest might say, "There, but for the grace of the gods, go I."

*It is the curse under which the creature suffers, not the power it wields, that makes a lord of Ravenloft.* Certainly these people and monsters are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to destroy, but they have been imprisoned in their respective domains so that they can never escape the effects of the misery that they themselves created. Perhaps they feel remorse and perhaps they aren't even capable of that emotion, but without that tragic background there is no darklord.



## Aderre, Gabrielle

**Lord of Invidia**
**8th-level Enchanter, Neutral Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 8 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 14 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 8 | Con | 10 |
| Hit Points | 21 | Int | 13 |
| THAC0 | 18 | Wis | 16 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 16 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Spells and evil eye | | |
| Special Defenses | Nil | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Gabrielle is a small, solid woman with hypnotic black eyes. Her hair is long, black, and wild, cascading in waves to the small of her back. Her dark hair and eyes come from her mother, a Vistana, and her pale skin is drawn from her *giorgio* (non–Vistani) father. She is middle-aged, though apart from a mass of gray hair at her left temple she looks several years younger, having the carriage and bearing of a young woman.

Gabrielle dresses like a Vistana, in vibrant, tiered skirts that swirl round her ankles and blouses embroidered with silver and golden threads. A kerchief often covers her head. Her ears are pierced with large gold hoops, every finger is laden with rings, and gold chains adorn her ankles and neck. She usually walks barefoot, strutting in her finery like an exotic jungle bird—one that is angry, bold, and predatory.

**Background:** Gabrielle's bloodlines link her to Madame Eva, the first Vistana in Ravenloft. She is only part Vistani, however, and therefore is not embraced by those of unmixed heritage. Her mother Isabella was not of full blood, so she was cast out of the Vistani tribes as a young girl. At just 12 years of age Isabella became a slave in Falkovnia. At 19 she finally escaped from her master's bonds, but she had become pregnant by him and subsequently bore Gabrielle in Richemulot.

The two women traveled alone for the next few decades, barely surviving by begging, stealing, telling fortunes, and entertaining. Isabella taught her daughter the Vistani charms and enchantments, just as her own mother had done for her. Isabella never revealed the identity of Gabrielle's father, though, and she forbade her daughter to speak of him. She would say only that he was evil, and that Gabrielle carried the blackness of his heart inside her.

"You must never bear children," said Isabella to her daughter one day. "A man, a babe, a home—these things can never be for you, Gabrielle, because tragedy will be the only result." Gabrielle grew up bitter, despising her father and the Vistani, who made her an outcast. Eventually she came to feel the same ill feeling for her mother, who had destroyed her self-esteem and ensured her eternal loneliness.

When Gabrielle was 19 her mother was killed by a werewolf in Arkandale (a domain that dissolved during the Grand Conjunction). Gabrielle escaped, however, and fled into the Mists, full of hate and plans for vengeance. The dark powers opened their arms and took her in, and as her hatred grew they increased her strength, until she achieved the power to become a lord.

Today Gabrielle is lord of Invidia. (She seized control of the land from its former lord, a werewolf who foolishly attempted to enslave rather than kill her.) She is an intense, persuasive, and charismatic woman. She despises the Vistani, but since she cannot harm them directly (see below), she often tries to manipulate others into doing so. She is not fond of the natives in her domain, and she is jealous of any happiness they manage to find. One of her few pleasures is toying with these innocent folk, destroying attachments, ruining families, and undercutting any person of social stature.

**Combat:** Gabrielle Aderre is an 8th-level enchanter. She also has the power of the *evil eye*: She can cast any memorized enchantment/charm spell from her eyes once per round, at will, without spell components. Spells cast by her *evil eye* don't count against those she can cast normally. For example, if she has memorized *charm person*, she can cast it through the evil eye 100 or more times that day, until she casts the actual spell from her memory.

Characters with Vistani blood (or, at the Dungeon Master's whim, any player characters with "nomadic" blood) receive a +2 bonus to their saving throws vs. Gabrielle's *evil eye*. Full-blooded Vistani are completely immune to her powers and spells. She can never wreak the vengeance she seeks—that is her curse.

Madame Gabrielle surrounds herself with charmed servitors. They will protect her even at the expense of their own lives. The most powerful of those she has enchanted is a wolfwere named Matton.

**Spell List**

1st level (4/day, plus 1 enchantment): *Affect normal fires*, *charm person**, *friends**, *hypnotism**, *mending*, *read magic*, *sleep**, *wizard mark*

2nd level (3/day, plus 1 enchantment): *Alter self*, *bind*, *ESP*, *fog cloud*, *forget**, *ray of enfeeblement**, *scare**, *Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter**, *whispering wind*

3rd level (3/day, plus 1 enchantment): *Dispel magic*, *hold person**, *spectral force*, *suggestion*, *wraithform*

4th level (2/day, plus 1 enchantment): *Charm monster**, *confusion**, *curse*, *emotion**, *magic mirror*

* Can be cast through the evil eye

## Anhktepot

**Lord of Har'Akir**
**Greater Mummy, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | –3 | Str | 19 |
| Movement | 9 | Dex | 8 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 13 | Con | 19 |
| Hit Points | 65 | Int | 15 |
| THAC0 | 7 | Wis | 23 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 3 |
| Damage/Attack | 3d6 | | |
| Special Attacks | Disease, spells | | |
| Special Defenses | +4 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | 25% | | |

This mummy is wrapped in white strips of funeral linen that have yellowed with age. He has torn his arms free and ripped away the swaths that covered his eyes in death, so many strips dangle in the wind as he staggers along. His eyes are golden lights, tinged with orange. His uncovered fingers are brown and withered. The lord's voice is a scratchy whisper, like sand grinding between two rocks. A golden ankh hangs on a chain around his neck and he wears the ceremonial headdress of the pharaohs, but he has removed the rest of his funeral vestments.

# III: THE WHO'S DOOMED OF RAVENLOFT

**Background:** Anhktepot, once a priest of the power Ra, desired immortality more than anything else. To learn the secrets of life, he performed horrid experiments upon many slaves for years. When he grew older and older, but was still unable to find the key to success, he razed many temples and cursed the powers for thwarting him. In response, Ra (see *Legends and Lore* [2108]) appeared to him and told him that for his sacrilege he would indeed live forever, though he might not like it.

The fallen priest was elated but soon began to suffer for his dream-come-true: Everyone he touched died. But rather than repent his terrible goals, Anhktepot began to learn how to animate and control the dead. He broke away from Ra, and eventually the priests of his renegade church rebelled and killed him.

Yet Ra's promise was good and Anhktepot was not truly dead. Unable to control his own, unliving body yet, he went mad as his priests embalmed and mummified his "corpse." When the ritual was completed and the sun set, the Mists moved in to claim their evil prize, and thus Anhktepot became lord of Har'Akir.

**Current sketch:** The mummy lord now spends decades at a time "dreaming" in his moldering tomb. He can neither truly sleep nor die, but he can forget the world for a time and muse upon the pleasure of having flesh and the power of having a nation to command. A event of extreme import to Anhktepot must occur in order to waken him and allow him to rise. He can feel the anxiety of his people, which rouses him from his dreams if it is great and brings him to settle the matter.

Usually his coming portends death and destruction.

The mummy's most fervent dream is to be human again. He would throw away immortality if he could only live a few years as a normal man. The dark powers taunt him by giving him the power to take human form, but only by draining a mortal of his or her life in a sunrise ceremony. (One round to complete, but it must be performed in the last 10 minutes before dawn.) For this treachery, he becomes a mere 0-level human until the sun goes down, at which time he reverts to mummy form. If killed while "human," he remains dead until he is mummified and entombed (at which time he regains full identity and powers), so he can never truly enjoy his brief hours as a mortal.

**Combat:** Anhktepot is a greater mummy as described in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 (2122). Those Dungeon Masters who wish to use *Van Richten's Guide to Ancient Dead* (9451) can consider him to be a mummy of the *fifth* rank of invulnerability.

The touch of the pharaoh causes a rotting disease that kills in 1d3 days. One day after infection, the victim experiences convulsions so violent that spellcasting and use of weapons are impossible. After the first day the victim permanently loses 1 point of Strength and Constitution, and 2 points of Charisma—only a *wish* spell can heal this loss. Recovery from the mummy rot itself requires one *cure disease* spell for every day the disease has progressed, and they must all be cast within a 24-hour period.

Anhktepot is turned as a "special" monster (see Table 1: Turning Undead on page 27 of *Realm of Terror* or see the DM™ screen). He is immune to damage from holy water, but suffers 1d6 points of damage from non-evil holy symbols. The ankh around his neck restores 2d6 points of damage per round, evil after he is reduced to 0 hp, so he will immediately rise if it is not removed.

In addition to his 25% magic resistance, the mummy is immune to: *charm*; *hold*; death magic; poison; cold-based spells; mind-control or mind-reading spells and psionic powers; and normal fire. He has a aura that forces all who look upon him to roll a fear check with a –4 penalty. At the Dungeon Master's discretion, horror checks may also be in order.

In life Anhktepot was a 13th-level priest of the sun god Ra, and he still wields the power of that position (although it isn't Ra who grants

his spells . . .). His major spell spheres are All, Astral, Charm, Creation, Elemental, Sun, and his minor sphere is Weather. His granted powers are the ability to cast *light*, *continual light*, and *sunray* once per day, and to control undead at will (instead of turn undead). He cannot shapechange into a hawk as can other priests of Ra. He gains all the normal spell bonuses and immunities that come with his 23 Wisdom (see the *Player's Handbook*).

Anhktepot is featured in *Darklords* (9331). His domain of Har'Akir is the setting of the adventure module *Touch of Death* (9338).

## ApBlanc, Tristen

**Lord of Forlorn**
**11-HD Ghost/Vampyre, Neutral Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 0 | Str | 18/76 |
| Movement | 9 (ghost); | Dex | 16 |
| | 12 (vampyre) | Con | 12 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 11 | Int | 16 |
| Hit Points | 88 | Wis | 8 |
| THAC0 | 11 | Cha | 19 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 (ghost) or 3 (vampyre) | | |
| Damage/Attack | Age 1d4×20 years (ghost) or 1d4/1d4/1d6 (vampyre) | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 40% (ghost) or special (vampyre) | | |

Tristen exists as two separate creatures: a ghost by night and a vampyre (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 [2122]) by day. He also exists in three separate time periods, so his appearance is varied.

As a ghost he appears to be a teenaged boy with bloated skin and dark veins that show clearly. His hair is matted, his clothing torn and dirty, and bloodstains mark his chest and the plain druidic kilt he wears. He shows sign of having been badly burned, with patches of exposed scalp, soot on the skin, and partially charred clothing.

As a vampyre he appears to be an incredibly handsome mortal, but at different times he appears to be various ages. At his youngest he dresses in the bright colors of a minstrel and has yellow-blond hair. At a later age he wears aristocratic highlander clothing, including a kilt with his family tartan, and his hair is a light brown shade. At his eldest he wears black and silver, and his hair is gray at the temples.

**Background:** Tristen was conceived by mortals, but his father Rivalin went off to war and was ironically killed by a scavenging vampire, which drained his life away even as his men searched for him on the battlefield. Rivalin died with his wife's name on his lips, swearing his love to her for all eternity. The young warrior soon arose as a blood-sucking creature, himself, and he flew to his woman, yet he was madly confused by the conflicting emotions within him: love and hate, sacrifice and *hunger*. True, he sipped at the vital nectar of his wife, but he loved her too much to kill her. As a result Tristen was born with the poison of vampirism in his veins.

Eventually, his father was destroyed, his mother was lynched by a mob, and he was hastily given over to the druids to be raised. They knew of his curse, but they believed he could be saved through the powers of Nature.

When he was 15 years of age, Tristen began to exhibit signs of vampirism. Believing that he would be killed for his evil ways by his druidic adoptive mother, he murdered her and drank of her blood. As she died, she cursed him to never leave the sacred grove where it all happened, and to live forever to rue his evil. By coincidence, she had just imbibed holy water, which was poison to the emerging vampire, so he died along with her.

Tristen's curse caused him to rise that night as a ghost anchored to the grove of sacred trees around the murder scene. Even more strangely, he regained mortal form the next morning, and now he walks the halls of his castle (built on the site of the sacred grove) as perhaps the very first vampyre—until night

# III: THE WHO'S DOOMED OF RAVENLOFT

falls, at which time he dies in searing agony and becomes a ghost once again . . . until the next dawn. . . .

**Current sketch:** For over 500 years Tristen has been trying to break the curse that binds him to his castle, but nothing has worked. He has tried and failed to destroy the ghost of his adoptive mother, who cursed him. He has tried and failed to kill every last druid in his domain (they have become a powerful underground society). He has commanded his goblyn minions (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 [2122]) to raze the forests themselves, attempting to destroy all the *sacred groves* that defy his reign of death.

**Combat:** Tristen's battle capabilities depend upon his current form. In ghost form he would be classified as a specimen of the *fourth* magnitude in *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts* (9355). He can accelerate aging in mortals who meet his gaze. He can *keen* twice per night (40-foot radius, –1 penalty to saving throws vs. death). His appearance can *cause revulsion* in those whom he touches (successfully save vs. paralysis or suffer a –6 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and proficiency checks for one week). Finally, he can *dominate victims* as they sleep, taking control of their bodies until dawn if he chooses (successfully save vs. paralysis with a –2 penalty to resist). All attempts to turn him are made with a –4 penalty. As a ghost he may be struck only by weapons of +3 or better enchantment, but a foe who is also ethereal needs only a +1 weapon. Tristen can *rejuvenate* to full hit points in one round, but he must have complete rest for two full turns after doing so—during the restive stage he is effectively helpless.

As a vampyre Tristen's main ability is to *charm* (as the spell) the victims of his bite. The saving throw is modified by –1 for every 2 points of damage his bite inflicts. Tristen also enjoys a few vampiric abilities: He receives a +2 bonus on attacks and a +4 damage bonus, due to enhanced Strength; weapons of at least +1 enchantment are required to hit him; he can summon 3d6 wolves or worgs three times per day (they arrive in 1d6 rounds and remain under his control for 2d4 rounds); and he can take the form of a worg at will.

**Worg form:** Dmg 3d12; AC 2; MV 18; SZ L; ML 16. (All other stats are as a vampyre. In this form Tristen cannot *charm* with his eyes, drain levels, or rejuvenate hit points.)

Tristen ApBlanc and his shadowy domain are the subjects of the *Castles Forlorn* deluxe boxed set (1088).

## Arijani

**Lord of Sri Raji**
**13th-level Illusionist, 9th-level Priest, Rakshasa, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | –5 | Str | 15 |
| Movement | 18 | Dex | 20 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 13+39 | Con | 18 |
| Hit Points | 130 | Int | 21 |
| THAC0 | 7 | Wis | 20 |
| No. of Attacks | 3 | Cha | 12 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d8/1d8/2d6 | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | See below | | |

Arijani is a rakshasa, a powerfully built humanoid that appears to be a cross between a man and a tiger. He is just over 7 feet tall and weighs nearly 325 pounds. His body is covered with the orange and black fur of the great cat, and his eyes burn with the cool fire of perfectly cut emeralds.

Like all rakshasa, Arijani is able to magically disguise himself with an almost-perfect *illusion*. Unlike other rakshasa, Arijani's illusionary forms are always fearful to those around him (observers always *feel* as they would if they could see right through his magical disguise), so he rarely bothers with it.

# III: THE WHO'S DOOMED OF RAVENLOFT

Arijani always wears the finest clothing and comports himself as a member of the highest of castes. His own pride gives him the air of nobility.

**Background:** Arijani's mother Mahiji was a human and a cruel priest of Kali's temple. She took a traveling assassin as a lover, and the birth of Arijani proved that he really was a rakshasa (which, in fact, was the avatar of the power Ravana). Mahiji prepared to offer up her child as a sacrifice, but Kali's avatar appeared to her, took the baby, and gave him to a human of a low caste to raise.

Ignorant of his true heritage, Arijani came to despise his low station and the scorn he suffered from his social betters, so he began to plot against them when he discovered his rakshasa abilities. Eventually he caused riotous havoc on the city where he lived, and blood flowed in the streets for a week. Kali's avatar moved to intervene, but Arijani tricked it and forced it to grant a *limited wish* in exchange for sparing its life: The evil man demanded that he be invulnerable to the attacks of any rakshasa—even Ravana himself—for all time. The avatar granted the wish, whereupon Arijani slew the avatar against his own word. The dark powers were well pleased, and they granted Arijani an island of terror.

**Current Sketch:** Arijani has adopted his mother's faith since he came to the land of the Mists. He believes that he was imprisoned in Ravenloft by Ravana, so he has turned to Kali for deliverance.

He seldom leaves his temple on Mount Yamatali, but will do so to hunt strangers who come into the Accursed City surrounding his home (see the poster map). In the meantime, he greatly fears *Ravana's Bane*, a crossbow that slew his father, and he suspects that it lies somewhere in his domain. He spends a great deal of time seeking the artifact.

**Combat:** As mentioned, Arijani's ability to take an illusory form has been warped by the dark powers, yet he still uses it to his advantage, for he can create three sadistic variations of it: First, he can take the form of a victim's worst nightmare, prompting a horror check. Second, he can take the form of a combat adversary's greatest enemy, prompting a fear check. Finally, he can use the ability normally, creating a disguise that may be pleasing to look upon, but which remains agonizingly suspicious all the while.

In physical combat he may lash out with his claws and then try to bite with his powerful jaws. He never uses conventional weapons. As a priest of Kali he can move silently (56% chance of success) and hide in shadows (70% chance). His spell spheres are All, Charm, Combat, Creation, Healing, and Necromantic.

Arijani can be harmed only by weapons of +3 or better enchantment, and any weapon of less than +5 enchantment inflicts only half damage. Like all rakshasa, Arijani is vulnerable to crossbows, but a *blessed* bolt does not kill him; it merely inflicts maximum damage. It is possible that such a bolt delivered from *Ravana's Bane* would slay him, but the theory is untested. Arijani is invulnerable to attack by any native of his domain, so only outsiders are a real threat.

His high Wisdom score renders him immune to many spells, and his Intelligence leaves him immune to 1st- through 3rd-level illusions. As an illusionist, himself, all spells of that school cast by him impose a –1 penalty to saving throws, and he saves vs. those spells with a +1 bonus (see the *Player's Handbook* for full rules).

**Spell List (Wizard)**

1st level (5/day, plus 1 illusion): *Audible glamour, color spray, light, phantasmal force, taunt, unseen servant*

2nd level (5/day, plus 1 illusion): *Blindness, blur, darkness, 15-foot radius, fog cloud, invisibility, Tasha's hideous uncontrollable laughter*

3rd level (5/day, plus 1 illusion): *Clairvoyance, flame arrow, haste, monster summoning I, spectral force, suggestion*

4th level (4/day, plus 1 illusion): *Fear, magic mirror, polymorph other, rainbow pattern*

5th level (4/day, plus 1 illusion): *Advanced illusion, demi-shadow monsters, dream, major creation, transmute rock to mud*

6th level (2/day, plus 1 illusion): *Permanent illusion, programmed illusion, project image*

Arijani and Sri Raji are featured in the adventure module *Web of Illusion* (9415).

## Azalin

**Lord of Darkon**
**18th-level Lich, Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 0 | Str | 17 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 10 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 18 (wizard) | Con | 18 |
| Hit Points | 54 | Int | 18 |
| THAC0 | 10 | Wis | 11 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 14 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d10 | | |
| Special Attacks | Spells | | |
| Special Defenses | +1 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Azalin's body is a dried skeletal thing held together by magic. His eye sockets are black and empty, with pinpoints of light burning deep in their recesses. His nose is an empty skeletal hole that is shaped like an inverted heart. The flesh still clings to his bones, but it is withered like that of a mummy. In a century or so his skeleton will be bare. In life his fingers were quite nimble, but the transformation to lichdom robbed him of his precious dexterity, which infuriates him to this day.

When he wants to emphasize his undead nature, Azalin wears just a cape with a burial shroud girding his loins and a few pieces of jewelry such as rings, arm bands, or a necklace. His cape is usually black with blood-red trim, which he leaves open to display his withered body. On his head he wears a black iron crown. A single large yellow gem adorns the crown's central spike.

When he wants to appear less shocking, Azalin dons garments that conceal most of his body—gloves cover his hands and a high-necked shirt hides his throat and jaw. The garments are always of the finest materials, suitable for the ruler of Ravenloft's largest domain. On many occasions, Azalin prefers to look like a normal, living person, so he disguises himself with a powerful illusion. He can choose any appearance, even that of a woman or demihuman close to his own height. Even his voice and odor change to fit the illusion. He always wears rich clothing and his crown, but they may or may not be a part of his illusion.

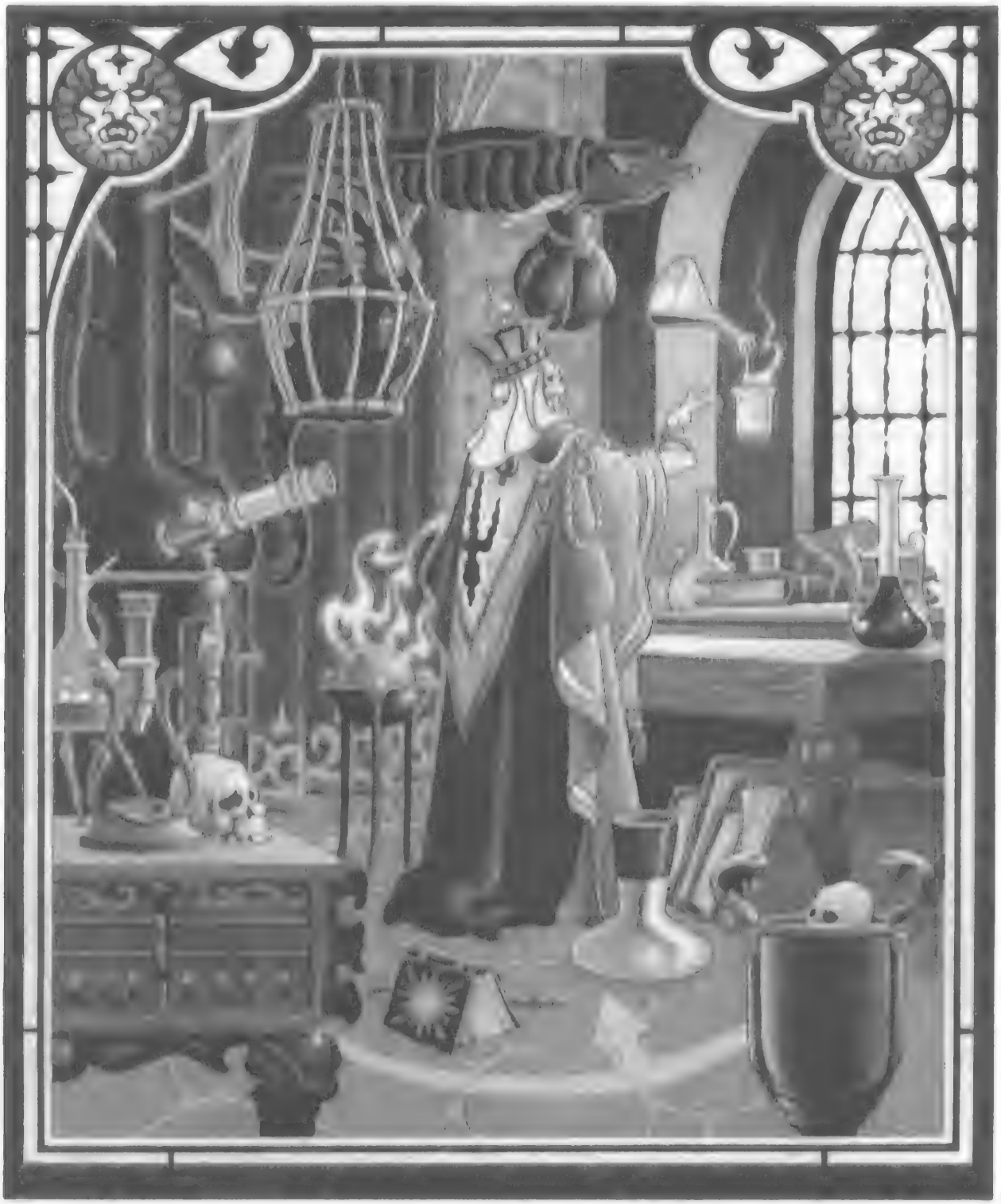
The only thing he cannot conceal is his aura of netherworld cold, which itself is not harmful, but even creatures that are native to cold climates shiver when he stands nearby. Because of that, he never gets too close to those he wishes to deceive.

Also, when not wrapped in illusion Azalin smells of death. The odor is difficult to describe—a mixture of mold, dust, and sour decay. Yet anyone who has smelled death before will instantly recognize the scent.

**Background:** Azalin was once a powerful human wizard-king, although he was known by another name, which he keeps secret (possibly because, as Rudolph van Richten speculates, knowledge of a lich's true name confers power over it). Even as he gained them, Azalin became hopelessly obsessed with accumulating ever more power and magical learning. Never one to care about what was right or wrong, he eagerly became a lich.

As an undead mage he ruled and tormented his subjects for decades. Finally, they hired a powerful band of mercenaries to destroy him, and the mage, desperate and near capture, fled into a glen cloaked in fog. The mercenaries searched the glen, but could not find him. The Mists had carried him into Barovia, the domain ruled by Strahd von Zarovich.

# III: THE WHO'S DOOMED OF RAVENLOFT



Despite his incredible powers, Azalin was trapped in Ravenloft, and he was further humiliated as he was subjugated by the lord of Barovia. Though his physical powers were greater than Strahd's, the mage still feared the vampire. Azalin was mystified by Strahd's connection to the land: He believed that without Strahd Barovia and all within it—including himself—would cease to exist. Under great duress Azalin became Strahd's servant, and he loathed every moment of it. He vowed that if he won his freedom, he would never again swear fealty to any creature, living or dead.

At Strahd's behest, Azalin taught him great sorceries. In addition, Azalin spent much time investigating the mysterious Mists surrounding Barovia. Strahd wanted him to find a way out of the demiplane and Azalin, yearning for the same escape, willingly complied. In time, Azalin and Strahd found passage to Mordent, where an alchemist was experimenting with a magical machine called the *Apparatus* (see page 125 of *Realm of Terror*). But Mordent was already linked to Ravenloft, so Azalin and Strahd found no escape.

The lich eventually discovered that any powerful personality might be granted a land in Ravenloft, so rather than stay in Barovia he walked into Strahd's choking fog. (Being dead, the poison did not affect him.) His forceful personality created Darkon, the largest domain in Ravenloft.

As the years passed, Azalin's desire to escape the land of the Mists only increased. He was certain that Strahd was the linchpin that held the demiplane together, so he spend a great deal of his time learning everything he could about the vampire. Then he discovered the prophecy of the Vistana Hyskosa, which foretold the end of Ravenloft, and he immediately set about fulfilling the final verse of the six-part prognostication. Eventually, with the help of a band of unsuspecting adventurers, he brought to pass the apocalyptic couplet, instigated the Grand Conjunction, and the Demiplane of Dread broke apart (see Chapter I of *Realm of Terror* for more information).

In the meantime, the erstwhile heroes discovered what they had done, and they were able to force the Grand Conjunction to collapse before it had completely unfolded. Azalin, in his haste to cause the event and to destroy Strahd, had turned his back on the heroes, which ultimately robbed both him and the vampire of that which they desired most—freedom. Quickly the dark powers took back their ignoble prisoners and all was, more or less, restored to normality. (Those who would like to recreate this exploit should play the adventure modules *From the Shadows* [9375] and *Roots of Evil* [9413]).

**Current Sketch:** More than anything else, Azalin desires power. Ravenloft gave him tremendous strength, but it paralyzed him as well. He can never rise above the experience level he now holds, nor can he ever learn more magic. Even if presented with a scroll and tutored in the use of new spells upon it, he cannot learn them. Magical information—even that not related to spells—seems to slip through his mind like dust through a net. If he were offered information about the workings of the Demiplane of Dread, for instance, he would not remember it, yet he would bear the pain of knowing that he once grasped that information. It is his curse to exist among mortals whose potential is, by comparison, boundless. If another wizard casts a spell that Azalin does not know, the lich burns with rage. Unable to progress, he looks backward and longs for his former life.

Few people know Azalin is a lich. Most folk, especially his subjects, see him as a despotic tyrant, evil but human. Only a few of his advisors are aware of his undead status, but all of them are monsters in their own right—vampires, drow, and the like. Some of the other lords of Ravenloft know him for what he truly is. Strahd von Zarovich is certainly aware of Azalin's true nature.

To reinforce his superiority and soothe his battered ego, Azalin encourages his subjects to

debase themselves. He throws parties for the nobles, where debauchery is expected and gross acts of evil are the entertainment. He toys with the allegiances of men and women, seeing how far they will sink to curry his favor. Torment is an art form to him.

Azalin's long term goals are unknowable. He is wholly evil and brilliant. Though he cannot remember new spells, his retention of other details is remarkable. He knows who has visited Darkon in the past and who is visiting his land today. He also monitors activities in other domains. A group of adventurers should never be able to get the upper hand on him. His plots contain circles within circles, always pitting rivals against each other. Almost as soon as it appears he has made a mistake, his enemies learn painfully that they are doing exactly what he wanted them to do.

**Combat:** Azalin does not engage in melee unless no other option exists. He rarely uses a weapon, but if he does, he adds a +1 Strength bonus to his attack and damage rolls. When he reveals his true nature, everyone within view must make a fear check with a –6 penalty. Any creature of less than 5 Hit Dice (or 5th level) automatically fails the check.

The touch of the lich is an absolute cold from beyond the grave. This touch inflicts 1d10 points of damage, but no Strength bonus is applied. When touched by this numbing cold, the victim must roll a saving throw vs. paralysis. A failed save means that the victim is completely unable to move. The paralysis lasts until some outside power dispels it.

This lich is immune to any weapon with a magical bonus less than +1. Monsters of less than 6 Hit Dice cannot harm him with normal physical attacks. He is utterly immune to *charm*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *sleep*, cold-based, electricity-based, death magic, as well as insanity or any form of mind control.

Azalin keeps a *stoneskin* spell active at all times. Further if he is successfully attacked from behind, a *contingency* spell hits the attacker with a *flesh to stone* spell.

Azalin prefers to use his spells to immobilize and capture his opponents. He only tries to destroy them if he is hard pressed in combat. Once prisoners, they are subjected to horrible tortures and frequently become his undead servants or unwilling slaves.

Azalin keeps innumerable scrolls in his palace, all written by himself. He usually doesn't carry them on his person, but he is rarely far from one. On his right hand Azalin wears a *ring of wizardry*, which doubles all 1st- through 3rd-level spells. He also carries a *wand of frost*. On his head is a *helm of comprehending languages and reading magic*. Other assorted magical items are scattered throughout his palace, most of them of little value. Azalin has a habit of collecting magical items, even cursed ones.

Azalin can raise any dead human or demihuman body to undead life, and with no known limit to the number. In one battle with Vlad Drakov's forces (of Falkovnia), Azalin

Azalin

raised all the dead on the battle field simultaneously, which swept away the opposing forces. Azalin can command almost any undead, and his orders override all others.

Still, Azalin's most fearsome power is spellcasting. He is an 18th-level mage and a genius. He has more years of experience than any living creature (and more than many undead creatures, too). He may not be able to learn new magic, but he is fully capable of using that which he knows extremely creatively, to gain the maximum effect.

**Spell List**

1st level (5 per day, 10 with ring): *Affect normal fires, alarm, change self, charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic, enlarge, hold portal, identify, light, magic missile, message, phantasmal force, read magic, Tenser's floating disc, unseen servant, wizard mark*

2nd level (5 per day, 10 with ring): *Alter self, bind, darkness 15-foot radius, detect invisibility, flaming sphere, fog cloud, improved phantasmal force, invisibility, knock, locate object, magic mouth, mirror image, ray of enfeeblement, shatter, spectral hand, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter, web, wizard lock*

3rd level (5 per day, 10 with ring): *Clairaudience, clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, fly, haste, hold person, item, lightning bolt, nondetection, protection from good 10-foot radius, suggestion, wind wall, wraithform*

4th level (5 per day): *Charm monster, confusion, contagion, curse, dimension door, emotion, Evard's black tentacles, fire trap, ice storm, magic mirror, minor globe of invulnerability, phantasmal killer, polymorph other, shadow monsters, stoneskin, wall of ice, wizard eye*

5th level (5 per day): *Animal growth, animate dead, chaos, conjure elemental, domination, feeblemind, hold monster, magic jar, monster summoning III, passwall, sending, summon shadow, telekinesis, wall of stone*

6th level (3 per day): *Bigby's forceful hand, contingency, death fog, disintegrate, enchant an item, eyebite, geas, guards and wards, legend lore, project image, stone to flesh, true seeing*

7th level (3 per day): *Drawmij's instant summons, finger of death, forcecage, limited wish, monster summoning V, power word stun, spell turning, teleport without error, vision*

8th level (3 per day): *Binding, demand, incendiary cloud, maze, Otiluke's telekinetic sphere, permanency, prismatic wall, symbol, trap the soul*

9th level (1 per day): *Bigby's crushing hand, energy drain, foresight, gate, Mordenkainen's disjunction, temporal stasis, wish*

Azalin keeps his life force in a 400-pound golden phylactery shaped like a dragon's head. Destroying his body merely triggers the amulet to seek out a new one, which he occupies over three full days. He keeps the amulet in a secret crypt that contains many bodies and formidable defenses. If the amulet is destroyed, Azalin's life force immediately enters his current body. The lich is instantly aware of this happening. If the amulet *and* his current body were both destroyed, Azalin would be permanently dead.

## Boritsi, Ivana

**Co-lord of Borca**
**0-level Human, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 8 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 11 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 0 | Con | 22 |
| Hit Points | 8 | Int | 14 |
| THAC0 | 20 | Wis | 10 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 17 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Poison touch (see below) | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Ivana is a lovely woman with deep blue eyes and black hair that tumbles over her shoulders in waving tresses. She dresses in alluring clothing that accentuates her beauty and masks the black heart within her. This lord doesn't appear to be anyone of power, and she uses her debutante image to cruel advantage. She loves nothing more than to enter a crowded tavern, play the helpless female, and incite several men to fight to death for her favor. Unfortunately, the victor is not likely to enjoy the fruits of triumph for more than a few minutes. Her kiss is as poisonous as that of a black widow spider.

**Background:** Ivana is the daughter of Klaus Boritsi and Camille Dilisnya (the first lord of Borca). She never knew her father; he was one of many husbands who came and went over the years, for Camille had the habit of poisoning her men when they angered her.

As she grew up Ivana learned well from her mother to mistrust males, yet there remained in her heart a yearning to love and be loved. At age 17 she met a young bard named Pieter in Levkarest, and she was fascinated by his gift for verse and recitation. Even more interesting to her, Pieter loved art above all else and seemed unimpressed by Ivana's startling beauty, so she began to woo him in earnest, but to no avail. At last, she began to listen closely to his poetry and lyrics, attempting to understand their power over him, and she became smitten to the heart with the purity of his artistry. She saw a charm and grace in it that she could never hope to find in herself, and she fell truly in love with Pieter in the process. When Ivana learned to love his art, Pieter finally began to love her back.

It might have been an uncharacteristically happy ending for the two of them, but Camille jealously put an end to the young lovers' bliss. She came to Pieter's bed in darkness and tricked him into believing she was her daughter. As they lay together, Ivana came

upon them and was shattered by the perceived betrayal of her true love. Camille insisted that Pieter had seduced her, expecting Ivana to follow in the family tradition and kill him, and she was not disappointed.

Ivana bought a magical contact poison from a necromancer, which became toxic when mixed with the natural fluids of the user's body—it had no effect upon her when she wore it, but it was horribly noxious to anyone else. She applied it to her lips and then poisoned her lover with a kiss. Camille sneered at Pieter's "unfaithfulness" and told Ivana that murdering him was the right thing to do. She ignored her daughter's resentment toward her in the matter, and it festered within Ivana until at last she poisoned Camille in the year 711 of the Barovian calendar. The dark powers were well pleased with the depth of her wrath, so they rendered her mortal kiss effective and permanent, and she became lord of Borca.

**Current Sketch:** Ivana is bitter to the core now. She destroys relationships wherever she goes, and poisons all men who court her. In the meanwhile she lives an excessively luxurious lifestyle, supported by her phalanx of "rent collectors," who are nothing more than thugs running a protection racket. She keeps them all on her black string by promising that the man who makes her wealthiest will be her consort. When any of them becomes troublesome, she declares him to be the winner, then poisons him and tells the others that he was untrue to her. They believe her because they each want to be her next lover, ignorant of the fact that a single kiss from her is lethal.

Ivana publicly disdains romance and love, yet secretly she still longs for companionship. Her curse is to forever pine in her heart of hearts for another Pieter, but to inevitably poison every man she loves.

When the Grand Conjunction took place, Ivana's cousin, Ivan Dilisnya sought her out. He was frightened by the apocalyptic earthquakes that shook the land, so he instinctively flew to his spiritual twin for comfort. As the Grand Conjunction collapsed the two lords were in close proximity, and their domains combined. Ivana's is the more dominating personality, so the realm retained the name of Borca while Dorvinia disappeared.

Today the two lords live in their manors at opposite ends of the domain. With the crisis of the Grand Conjunction in the past, they have come to resent each other deeply. Hence, they spend much time creating new poisons, both attempting to find a toxin that will kill the other, but all they manage to do is foul the land and water, killing natives and visitors alike. Those visiting Borca should beware of a purplish tinge in water or fruit that grows there, for it is a sign of the taint of poison.

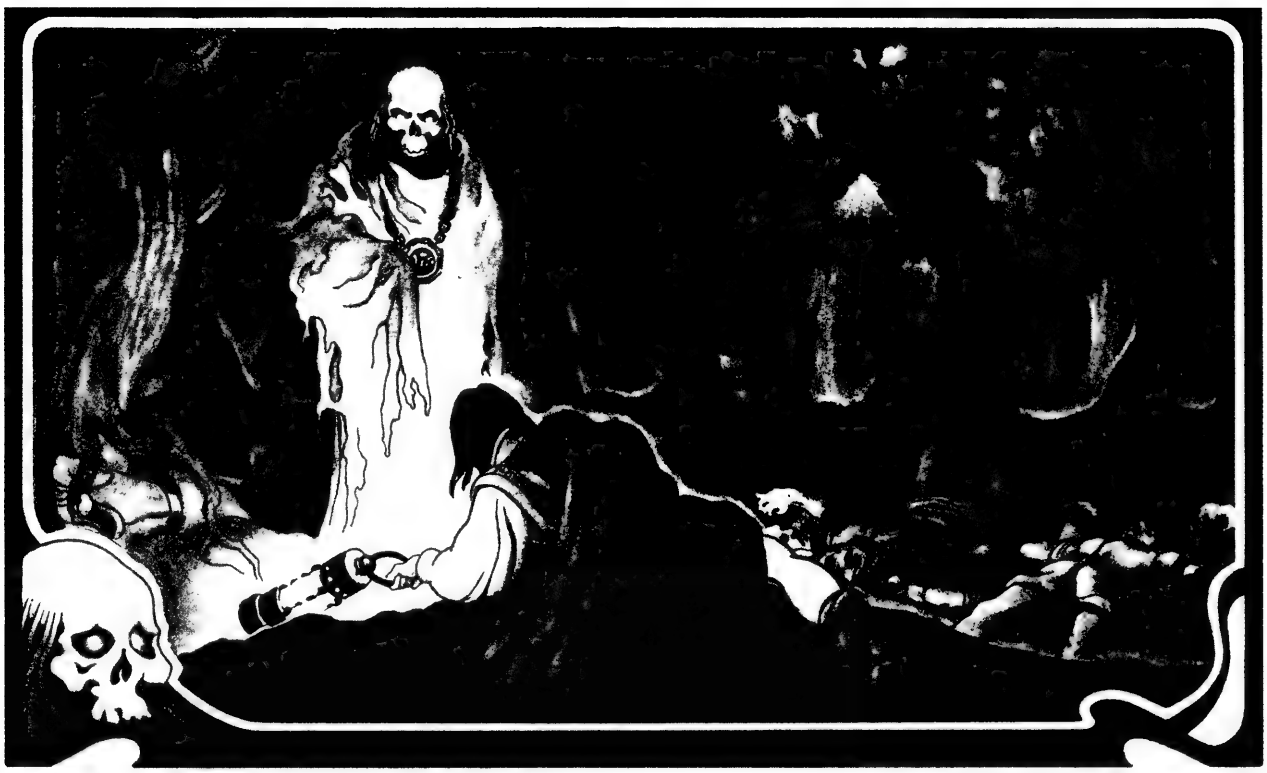
## d'Honaire, Dominic

**Lord of Dementlieu**
**7th-level Enchanter, Neutral Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 9 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 11 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 7 | Con | 10 |
| Hit Points | 18 | Int | 17 |
| THAC0 | 18 | Wis | 12 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 7–14 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Dominic is about 5′7″ tall and slightly plump. He pulls back his red hair into a short, well-groomed ponytail and wears a neatly trimmed beard and mustache. He can control his apparent Charisma, allowing it to range from 7 to 14. His usual score is about 11.

**Background:** This lord is the grandson of Dr. Germain d'Honaire, a mesmerist who was in Mordent when it became part of Ravenloft. Dominic's mother died in childbirth. He was the proverbial "bad seed"—born with an evil core that no doubt caused her death. As a



child, he could suggest an idea so subtly, so skillfully, that even adults would believe it was their own. Often he would pit one person against another, cause serious damage, and never take the blame himself. The more chaos, anger, and hate his intrigues generated, the happier Dominic became. He was a handsome child, and especially flirtatious with the ladies, who found his behavior harmless and charming, so they lavished affection on the poor, motherless boy. They did not suspect how twisted and advanced his little mind actually was.

When his grandfather died, the family decided to leave Mordent. This was actually Dominic's idea, although his father Claude thought it was his own. Claude decided to brave the Mists of Ravenloft and see where it took them. New lands opened up for little Dominic. Unbeknownst to his family, he became the lord of a new domain, Dementlieu.

**Current Sketch:** Dominic is a master manipulator and schemer. He lives like a spider weaving a complex web of plots. Like most lords, Dominic received a curse along with his domain. The more romantically attracted he becomes to a woman, the uglier she finds him. To others, his appearance is unchanged, but to her he becomes repulsive. The curse leaves him bitter and frustrated—he killed his first love in anger, for she could not bear the sight of him. His marriage is one of political convenience, with no emotional bonds.

**Combat:** Dominic has the combat abilities and spell effects of a 7th-level enchanter, but he cannot actually cast spells. Rather, his voice can act as a *suggestion* spell at any time, and his gaze can act as a *domination* spell. Dominic himself is completely immune to any sort of mental attack. He avoids personal combat at all costs and has several powerful protectors who will fight for him if necessary.

## Dilisnya, Ivan

**Co-lord of Borca**
**0-level Human, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 8 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 11 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 0 | Con | 22 |
| Hit Points | 8 | Int | 18 |
| THAC0 | 20 | Wis | 15 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 7 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Poison touch (see below) | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Ivan is a small, thin man, standing 5′7″ tall and barely weighing 120 pounds. His curly blond hair forms a tangled halo about his face and shoulders. His eyes are bright blue and he rolls them frequently while conversing, at the same time sliding his tongue across his teeth. His thin lips are usually drawn up in a quirky grin.

Ivan is a foppish man who fancies himself a great actor. Aside from his theatrical costumes, he rarely wears the same clothes twice. His costumes include the fittings of a court jester, king, huntsman, paladin, and monk. Twice a week he dons a costume for the day. Armor, weaponry, and similar trappings that he wears are fake—merely stage props.

Ivan has a soft, tenor voice and a high, rapid-fire laugh that makes listeners cringe. Yet at a moment's notice he can change them both. His laugh slows to a guttural chuckle, or his voice drops to a low, velvety whisper, then booms for dramatic effect. He enjoys such changes because he thinks they illustrate his theatrical talents. When he speaks, he gestures dramatically to punctuate his words. At times he paces, waving his arms in exaggerated poses. Most folk find him quite strange.

**Background:** Ivan is the only son of Boris Dilisnya, who was the son of Natalia Olszanik-Dilisnya. Natalia's distant relatives were visiting Strahd's castle in 351, in anticipation of the great wedding of Strahd's brother Sergei and his dream girl Tatyana. Feeling ill, some of them left early. As they rode away from the castle, Strahd murdered the remaining guests and Barovia became part of Ravenloft. The Dilisnyas were spared death, but the dark powers were able to grab them before they could escape the Mists, and they became trapped in Ravenloft forever.

Boris Dilisnya, Ivan's father, grew up in Barovia. He married Stefania Septow and they had a daughter, Kristina. In 684 a distant cousin, Camille Dilisnya, became the lord of Borca, and Ivan's family moved to that nearby domain. Camille considered them to be the wrong side of the family tree, the side that should be "pruned."

Five years later, under a dark moon, Stefania bore a second child—a boy, Ivan, who was destined to become lord of Dorvinia. On the same day, Camille Dilisnya gave birth to a girl, whom she named Ivana. The names were coincidental, but the two children were like evil twins. Ivana eventually became lord of Borca.

At age 6 Ivan was torturing animals, sometimes to death. At 8 he was playing harmful pranks on his playmates. At 10 he poisoned a servant's child after she stole a pastry. Ivan laughed as the poor waif died. Finally, at 12 Ivan poisoned his mother. Although he brags about it now, he managed to make it look like an accident at the time. Only his sister Kristina could expect no harm from him; Ivan loved her deeply and she, blind to his evil, doted on her "dearest little brother." But she did not remain blind to his evil for long.

When Kristina took a husband, Ivan became intensely jealous, and when she gave birth to a child, Ivan felt completely betrayed. He poisoned her husband, then went upstairs and poisoned Kristina as she nursed her infant son. (A midwife managed to save the baby.)

In 710 his own family chased Ivan to the Mists. Ivan was 26. Entering them, he found a land to suit his own tastes, created by his own evil. He named the land Dorvinia. In 712 Ivan

took a bride, Lucretia, and in 716 he took her life. During their union Lucretia bore three children. Ivan believes they were stillborn, but some say midwives snatched the babes at Lucretia's request.

When the Grand Conjunction occurred, Ivan realized that he was no longer trapped within Dorvinia. His immediate impulse was to seek out his spiritual twin, Ivana Boritsi, who was lord of Borca. They were together as the Grand Conjunction collapsed, and as a result their domains merged. Ivana was the more dominant personality, so the joined domains took the name of her realm, Borca.

**Current Sketch:** Ivan has never lost his fiendish and childish mentality. As a young man he had expensive cravings, particularly for fine desserts and rare wines. When he became lord of Dorvinia, Ivan lost his sense of taste. Now, to him all drinks are like bile, all foods are like dust. He feels the loss keenly, and would sacrifice virtually anyone and anything to regain his palate. He often hosts elaborate banquets, hoping to enjoy the fare vicariously. Guests who know him well feign indifference to the food. If they appear to dislike it he is offended, but if they enjoy it too much he is enraged.

It is rumored that Ivan often wakes at night in a cold sweat, calling to his sister Kristina in terror. His attendants dare not mention these events in his presence. Her name is like poison on one's lips: Repeat it to Ivan and he will make sure the results are fatal.

**Combat:** Ivan has no combat abilities, but Ravenloft has granted him a deadly power. He can turn any object he touches into poison. He can do this three times per day. Each time he can choose one of three strengths for his toxin: A "deadly" toxin kills victims who fail their saving throw vs. poison, a "dangerous" one inflicts 4d6 points of damage on characters who fail to save, and a "malingering" toxin takes hold like a sickness. Within an hour

victims become weak and cannot walk. They remain bedridden for 1d4 days.

Ivan himself is immune to all forms of poison, paralysis, and disease (including magical diseases). In addition to his natural toxins, he can prepare a poison or drug with virtually any effect. His favorite concoction remains in the victim's system for a day, then causes a sudden and violent death. Ivan has an antidote of sorts, but it merely delays the poison's release for another day. He keeps several retainers on a leash this way—each day they need the antidote or they will die. As long as only Ivan knows the antidote, they must remain loyal to him.

## Dr. Dominiani

**Lord of Dominia**
**Vampire, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 1 | Str | 18/91 |
| Movement | 12, Fl 18(C) | Dex | 12 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 9+3 | Con | 17 |
| Hit Points | 43 | Int | 18 |
| THAC0 | 11 | Wis | 11 |
| No. of Attacks | 2 | Cha | 16 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d4+5 (×2) or by weapon (+2, +5) | | |
| Special Attacks | Energy drain | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 5% | | |

Dominiani is 5′10″ tall, and weighs about 160 pounds. He has dark hair which he wears, along with his clothes, rather in the manner of a Victorian doctor. In fact he claims to be medical man; a psychologist and mesmerist to be precise. His tiny island of terror is little more than the building and grounds of a sanitarium.

Although Dr. Dominiani is a vampire, he is often suspected of being a werewolf, for his features are distinctly lupine. He has extraordinarily bushy eyebrows, a heavy beard, and long, knobby-knuckled fingers. Often he plays up this image when it serves his desire to confuse those who would hunt him. To further blur his true nature, he is not bothered by garlic, and he openly displays his love for the spice to baffle those who are wary of him.

**Background:** Dominiani was once a vassal of Duke Gundar, vampire lord of Gundarak. Secretly he plotted to kill his master and usurp his place, and eventually he succeeded. Gundar was furious with a group of heroes who defeated his bid to conquer Kartakass and annex its lands, so he rendered himself vulnerable to their attacks in order to lure them into a deadly trap. Dominiani's part was to hypnotize their warrior before the confrontation and convince her to pull a cord that would draw a heavy tapestry across a window, blocking off the sunlight that would render Gundar helpless at the crucial moment. The doctor reported complete success, but actually did nothing whatsoever to the fighter. As a result, the sunlight held Gundar helpless while the heroes did their work.

Dr. Dominiani proclaimed himself the lord of Gundarak, yet the title remained in question for some time, until the Grand Conjunction came and went. When it was all over, Barovia and Invidia had absorbed the land of Gundarak and the dark powers rewarded the petty vampire with a tiny island of terror. Thus, Dominiani's dream of lordship is fulfilled, yet his domain is pitifully small. It is said that Dominiani always hears laughter in the wind, echoing like the maniacal hysterics behind the walls of his sanitarium, mocking his small achievement.

**Current Sketch:** Dominiani ruthlessly runs his asylum-domain now. Unwary travelers who step out of the Mists are often relieved to be his guests at first, for his vampire orderlies rescue them from the wolves that prowl the woods around his estate, but soon they become patients at his facility. His *therapy* is a pure nightmare.

Each *session* ends with the patient being hypnotized, at which time the vampire feeds upon his or her brain fluid. Each feeding destroys 1 point of Intelligence, and when the

patient's score reaches 0, he or she becomes irrevocably mad (only a *wish* spell or similar means will restore the character). After that, the patient is fair game for the orderlies, who kill him or her slowly to preserve their food supply.

**Combat:** Dr. Dominiani enjoys all the abilities and vulnerabilities of a *mature* vampire (see page 147 of *Realm of Terror*), but he is not affected by garlic, as mentioned above.

Those who are interested in learning more about Dr. Dominiani's past should play the adventure module *Feast of Goblyns* (9298).

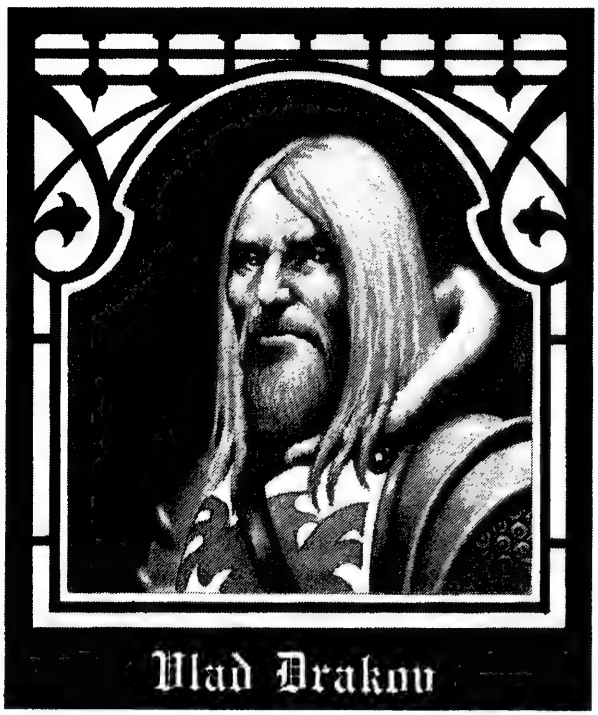
## Drakov, Vlad

**Lord of Falkovnia**
**14th-level Warrior, Neutral Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | By armor | Str | 16 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 12 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 14 | Con | 15 |
| Hit Points | 80 | Int | 15 |
| THAC0 | 7 (4 w/ rod) | Wis | 11 |
| No. of Attacks | 2 (4 w/ rod) | Cha | 16 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d4+4 or 1d6+4 or by weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Nil | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 50% | | |

Vlad is a large, dark man who is 70 years of age, though he appears to be no more than 40. He stands 6'3" tall with a wide, heavy frame. His skin is a weather-beaten brown, creased by age and rough living, and his features are coarse. He wears a full, uneven beard that is streaked with gray. His light brown hair is limp and unkempt. He has brooding blue-gray eyes and a large, hawkish nose. His teeth are even, perfect, and white. His voice is gravelly and low.

Vlad always wears some sort of battle dress. He usually wears chain mail with forearm and shin plates, topped with a black cape. The cape, which is trimmed in white fur, is loosely




gathered by a thick leather belt with a massive silver buckle. The buckle is fashioned into a screaming hawk's head, Vlad's personal symbol. A pair of gauntlets hangs from his belt. A sheath for a rod also hangs from the belt, but Vlad usually carries the rod in his right hand.

**Background:** Drakov hails from the kingdom Thenol, which lies in the realm of Taladas on the planet Krynn. In Thenol, Drakov headed a mercenary band known as the "Talon of the Hawk." (His nickname was "the Hawk" and his men were called "talons.") Vlad was noted for his ruthless and brutal tactics. He worked for whomever paid him the most money, usually the evil fanatics of Hith.

One evening long ago, Drakov's troupe was leaving the Conquered Lands after a session of looting and pillaging. A fog swelled from the ground as they rode and the Mists carried Drakov and his men into Ravenloft, depositing them on the edge of Darkon, the domain of Azalin the lich. Drakov believed he had

discovered a new land and set out to conquer a slice of it. He was naive to the demiplane's powers, however, and though he knew of Azalin, he underestimated the lich.

Drakov began a campaign of terror. His talons sacked a small village and the Hawk ordered a mass execution of those who resisted. As was his habit, he had them impaled on thick pikes, which were then planted in the ground to create a grisly garden of agony. Vlad ate his meals while he watched them die, as was his custom.

Then the familiar spectacle changed. When the last victim ceased to writhe and moan, the bodies turned into zombies. Pulling themselves off the pikes, the creatures attacked Drakov's men. Additional creatures, all dead, began to swarm onto the scene from all sides. In desperation, the talons fled into the Mists.

A new domain opened up for Drakov, and he became its lord. He and his men settled in the new land and named it Falkovnia ("Realm of the Hawk")—it was the year 690 on the Barovian calendar. Refugees from Darkon and other territories spilled across the border, hoping for a better existence. Drakov's men enslaved many of them, but allowed others to settle freely.

Vlad has tried to invade Darkon four times since he became the lord of his own domain, and every attempt has failed. Each talon who perished on Darkonite soil immediately became an undead soldier that rose to fight against its former comrades. Drakov also has tried to conquer other domains bordering Falkovnia, but he has failed each time. The strength of the enemy lords, who are empowered by the demiplane, make such conquests unrealistic.

**Current Sketch:** Before Ravenloft took him in, Drakov was just a henchman, hired by rulers who looked down upon "his kind." Their insults burned him, for he, too, aspired to rule. Ravenloft gave him what he sought—a position of ultimate leadership—but not what he truly desired—the respect of other rulers and the strength to instill fear and awe in other lords. His former masters are no longer present to appreciate his position, and Azalin is so powerful that he looks down on Drakov just as Drakov's former employers did. None of the other lords give him much thought either.

With no lands to conquer and no leaders to impress, Drakov has developed other forms of amusement. His favorite pastime remains the observation of a slow death. No matter who or what the victim is, he never tires of the sight. He usually takes his evening meal on the terrace of his keep, which overlooks the grounds of his estate. While he dines, at least one victim is impaled on a 10-foot stake. As gravity draws the victim down the pike, the body's descent becomes a sort of meter for the progression of the meal. Occasionally, if Drakov has invited guests to witness the spectacle, an orchestra plays in the background.

Drakov has two other joys: hawking and mock combat. He practices both regularly. The hawks are trained to attack on his command, but he rarely directs their attacks against people. He cherishes the hawks and prefers not to subject them to potentially deadly counterattacks. Oddly enough, though Vlad has little regard for human life, he cannot abide the suffering of his birds.

**Combat:** Years of battle have eroded Vlad's strength and endurance. Nonetheless, he is still a match for many younger fighting men. The land gives him might and energy beyond that of a normal person his age.

Vlad is proficient in the use of almost any battlefield weapon. In particular, he is skilled in the axe, bow, mace, flail, many polearms, and the sword. When striding into combat he prefers to carry a short sword and hand axe on his belt. He is also an excellent horseman. He chooses his armor to match the situation: While fighting on horseback he prefers plate mail, and while on foot he favors chain mail. In either case he carries a shield.

Vlad is extremely canny in battle, making

superb use of the terrain against his opponent. He willingly stoops to any dirty trick and never abides by any rules of combat. On his left hand Vlad wears a *ring of free action*. He also carries a *rod of flailing* in his right hand, or wears it in a sheath on his belt. The gauntlets dangling from his belt are *gauntlets of ogre power*. He is not known to possess any other magical items.

Vlad finds all magic distasteful, even though he uses magical items himself. He despises spells and spellcasters. Ravenloft's dark powers have granted him a magic resistance of 50%. Even healing and other beneficial spells are subject to this resistance.

## Godefroy, Lord Wilfred

**Lord of Mordent**
**Ghost, Chaotic Evil**

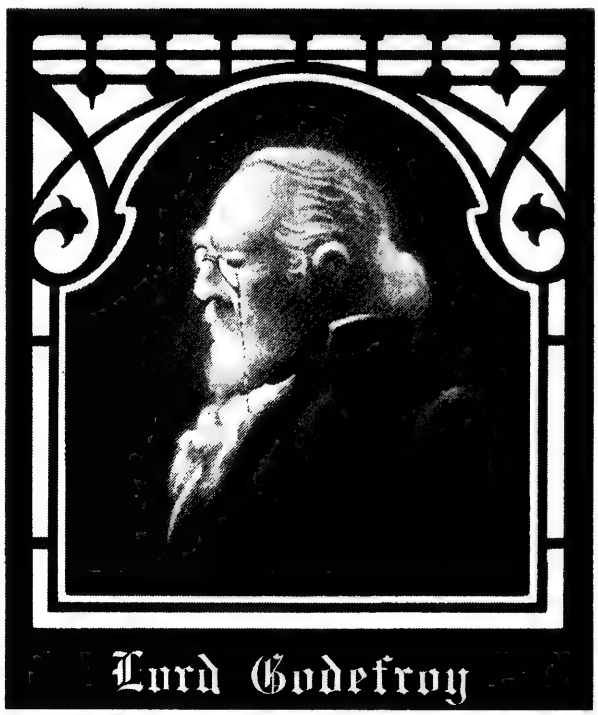
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 0 | Str | — |
| Movement | 9 | Dex | — |
| Level/Hit Dice | 10 | Con | — |
| Hit Points | 40 | Int | 14 |
| THAC0 | 11 | Wis | 11 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 15 |
| Damage/Attack | Nil | | |
| Special Attacks | Ages victims 1d4×10 years | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

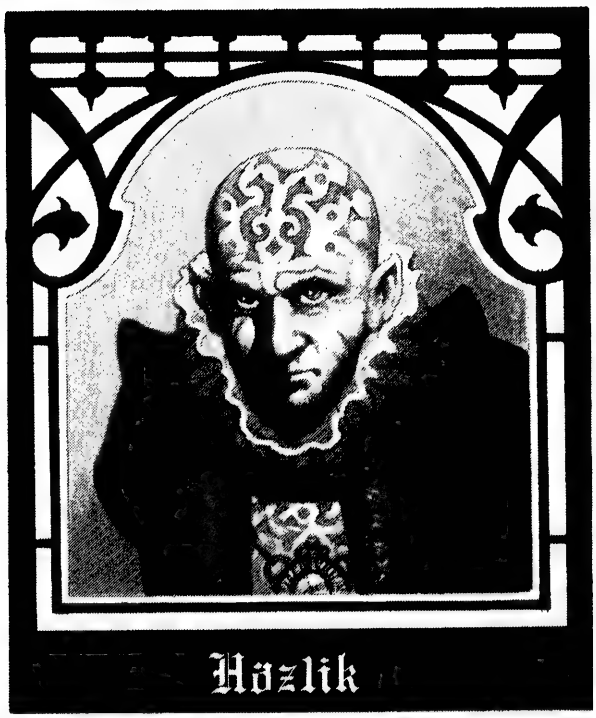
Lord Godefroy is a ghost. As such, he appears most often as a transparent figure. He wears a high-necked, ruffled shirt and a close-fitting black coat with tails. His gray hair is pulled back tightly and worked into a complex knot on the back of his head. He appears as an old, stooped man in his 70s, his face deeply lined, brows knit together, and eyes squinting harshly. He sometimes wears a pince nez which is fastened to his coat by a chain. His expression is always severe and unforgiving.

**Background:** Lord Wilfred Godefroy inherited the Gryphon Hill estate in Mordent. He married Estelle Weathermay and they had a single child, a girl. Godefroy was disappointed, and he was an evil man with a vile temper. During a fit of rage he killed his wife, and when the little girl attempted to intervene he killed her as well. Then he made it look like an accident in the stable, shooting his best stallion to prove the point.

For the next year Godefroy was haunted by the spirits of his wife and daughter, until he finally committed suicide. By his own last request, he was buried in the mausoleum of Heather House, the largest estate in Mordent, although his wife and child are buried in the Gryphon Hill cemetery. He did not want their spirits haunting him in death as they had in life.

Godefroy's activities had captured the attention of the dark powers, but Mordent was not yet a domain. Then Strahd von Zarovich and Azalin came to Mordentshire, and Mordent became part of Ravenloft. When Strahd and Azalin left, Lord Godefroy was the most powerful evil force in the area, so he became its lord and his powers increased.


Lord Godefroy




**Current Sketch:** Godefroy is an arrogant, conceited snob. He has a hair-trigger temper and a creative bent toward evil. Today he is a ghost rather than a haunt. He can roam freely around the entire domain, but he usually restricts himself to Mordentshire and its surroundings, including Gryphon Hill and the Weathermay estate (Heather House).

This vicious spirit fears only his wife and daughter. Each night, Lady Godefroy and her child hunt down Lord Godefroy and tear at his incorporeal flesh, cursing him for their murders. Lord Godefroy does what he can to hide from them, which is very little. He vents his fear and frustration on those foolish enough to visit Gryphon Hill, which is uninhabited.

**Combat:** Godefroy is a normal ghost, with the following changes: Any priestly attempt to turn him has no effect. Furthermore, any undead creature within 100 yards of Godefroy gains a +2 bonus against turning attempts (the "sinkhole of evil" effect—see page 27 of *Realm of Terror*).

## Hazlik

**Lord of Hazlan**
**12th-level Invoker, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 8 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 17 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 12 | Con | 10 |
| Hit Points | 45 | Int | 17 |
| THAC0 | 17 | Wis | 11 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 9 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Spells | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Hazlik is a man in his 60s. He is completely bald, and his head is tattooed with many strange and arcane symbols. He sometimes wears a goatee, but no mustache. His left eye is brown and his right eye is blue. Needless to say, he stands out in a crowd.

Hazlik wears robes that are common to the red wizards of Thay. They are red, long sleeved, and cover him from neck to toe. The collar is ruffled, but the robe is open in front, revealing his hairless, tattooed chest. He also wears a silver chain bearing a heavy round silver pendant that is adorned with a single yellow gemstone.

**Background:** Hazlik was once a red wizard of Thay who was rising quickly through the social and magical ranks. Unfortunately, he made the wrong enemies. His offenses were relatively minor, so his adversaries decided not to kill him. Instead, they humiliated him. They kidnapped Hazlik and tattooed his head and body with designs that only women wear.

Hazlik swore vengeance upon his enemies and devoted himself fully to his craft. (This was easy because the tattooing left him a social outcast.) One night, Hazlik was searching the

woods for an ingredient vital to an experiment. Mists rose from the ground, making it difficult to see, but he walked onward and found himself in the Nightmare Lands. Daunted by its alien nature, he quickly retreated into the Mists. For months he dwelled in the fog, nursing his hatred and making plans for his enemies in Thay, yet he never returned to that realm. The fog lifted and Ravenloft granted him his own domain, Hazlan.

**Current Sketch:** Hazlik has an abiding hatred for wizards. He will not tolerate them in his land and eliminates any he finds. He will not take an apprentice either.

Each night he dreams of Thay and of his humiliation and defeat at the hands of his enemies. In his dreams he is always weak and cowardly. He therefore dreads sleep and uses potions and philters to delay the inevitable. Thanks to this magic, he sleeps only once every few days.

**Combat:** Hazlik has all of the obvious abilities of a 12th-level invoker. In addition, he can detect the casting of any magical spell in Hazlan. He can also determine the approximate location of the casting within 10 miles, minus 1 mile for each level of the spell. For example, he would know a 3rd-level spell had been cast somewhere in a circle with a 7-mile radius.

If Hazlik is killed, his life force retreats into the yellow gemstone he wears. Only powerful magic can destroy the stone. Anyone who subsequently touches the gem must save vs. spell, and failure means the character cannot resist wearing the pendant. Once the pendant hangs around his or her neck, the character will defend it to the death (although nothing else prevents its removal). Each night the wearer of the pendant dreams that he or she is battling Hazlik. If Hazlik wins this nightmarish struggle, the dreamer dies and the evil lord invades the victim's corpse. Within a month, the body itself is slowly transformed until it finally fits the description of Hazlik above, and the evil wizard is completely reborn.

**Spell List**

1st level (4/day, plus 1 invocation): *Alarm, burning hands, detect magic, enlarge, magic missile, message, phantasmal force, read magic, shield, unseen servant*

2nd level (4/day, plus 1 invocation): *Alter self, continual light, detect invisibility, flaming sphere, invisibility, knock, web, wizard lock*

3rd level (4/day, plus 1 invocation): *Fireball, fly, hold undead, item, lightning bolt, spectral force, wraithform*

4th level (4/day, plus 1 invocation): *Dig, dimension door, fire trap, ice storm, phantasmal killer, polymorph other, stoneskin, wall of fire*

5th level (4/day, plus 1 invocation): *Cloudkill, cone of cold, dream, magic jar, passwall, sending, wall of force*

6th level (1/day, plus 1 invocation): *Bigby's forceful hand, chain lightning, contingency*

## Hiregaard, Sir Tristen/Malken

**Lord of Nova Vaasa**
**7th-level Fighter, Lawful Neutral/ Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 2 | Str | 17 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 15 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 7 | Con | 12 |
| Hit Points | 52 | Int | 13 |
| THAC0 | 14 | Wis | 14 |
| No. of Attacks | 3/2 rounds | Cha | 18/3 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Weapon specialization | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Sir Tristen Hiregaard is a tall muscular man with dusky skin, raven-black hair, and a thick mustache whose ends are waxed into stiff points. His face is set in a stern expression, but there is compassion in his dark eyes. He appears to be in his early 50s due to his dark hair; in fact, he is 65.

Tristen dresses in loose black trousers, tall black riding boots, and a bright red shirt. The yellow scarf he wears around his neck is embroidered with red and black horses, and scarves patterned with diagonal bands of red and black are folded and tied around his upper arms.

**Background:** Tristen Hiregaard was the first son of Romir Hiregaard, a princely knight of Vaasa, a principality on a distant world in the Prime Material Plane. His father taught him the arts of riding, weaponry, and war, as well as the nobles' code, which proscribed strict rules for interactions between peasants and nobles, and between a noble and his prince.

Romir Hiregaard was an honest, fair ruler, but he had one fatal flaw: If he even imagined his young wife was unfaithful to him, he flew into an insane rage. One day he caught his wife in the arms of another man, and in a fit of passion Romir killed them both. Only later did he learn that the man had innocently been teaching his wife how to waltz.

With her dying breath Romir's wife cursed him. From that day on, he would kill any woman he fell in love with, or any man that crossed him. Unable to face up to his evil deed, Romir killed himself, and the curse was transferred to his son.

The curse did not manifest until Tristen first fell in love at age 15. The victim was a fair-haired peasant girl who worked as a servant in the family castle. The crime was quickly hushed up (for Tristen was the head of his noble household now) but it left the young boy with deep emotional scars. He was by nature and training both honest and compassionate. Yet he had enjoyed killing the girl, even though he felt great remorse about it later. By now the dark powers were observing Tristen and their hold on him strengthened with each new killing. Eventually Tristen was pulled into Ravenloft, and his personality split.

Sir Hiregaard is of lawful neutral alignment; his alter-ego, known to the people of Nova Vaasa as Malken, is a chaotic evil killer who feeds upon Sir Hiregaard's secret jealousies and angers, savagely killing the women he loves and the men who stand in the way of his desires.

**Current Sketch:** Sir Tristen is head of the Hiregaard family, which controls and exacts tribute from the farmlands along the Dnar River and the city of Liara. Unlike Nova Vaasa's other noble families, the Hiregaards treat their peasants with fairness and dignity. On occasion Sir Hiregaard has even been known to show kindness, but he rarely has an opportunity to put his charitable impulses into practice. Bound by a strict set of rules that demand obedience to his ruler and his laws, he collects every coin of tax due. He is never brutal in his collection methods, but he is always very, very thorough. Some of his peasants revere him as their champion, while others despise him as much as they would any other overlord.

Sir Hiregaard is very much the ladies' man, and many women–peasants and nobles alike–vie for his favors, for he showers them with expensive gifts. But others do their best to avoid his attention. After all, several of his past lovers have died mysterious, violent deaths.

Whenever he begins to feel the stirrings of jealousy or anger, Sir Hiregaard orders his guards to lock him into his personal chambers, high in the master's tower of Castle Faerhaaven. There, sometimes for days on end, he waits until his passions have cooled. He believes that he can control his rages in this fashion and that he has made a new life for himself in Nova Vaasa, but he is wrong.

In fact Sir Hiregaard undergoes a hideous transformation when the rages strike. His hair becomes stark white, his frame gnarled and misshapen. His pockmarked face twists into a hideous leer and his eyes burn with fury. He becomes the fiend Malken.

**Combat:** Sir Hiregaard is proficient in four weapons: the long sword, composite short bow,

horseman's pick, and horseman's mace. Additionally, he has specialized in combat with the mancatcher. When using this unusual weapon he gets two attacks per round, gains a +1 bonus to his attack rolls, and adds a +2 bonus to his damage rolls (in addition to his normal Strength bonus). Malken shares these proficiencies, although he prefers to attack his victims (who are usually far weaker than he is) with his bare hands.

Sir Hiregaard's long sword is a *defender +4*. Its hilt ends in a silver horse's head. He wears *chain mail +2* armor.

The Hiregaard family commands 60 foot soldiers (1st-level fighters) equipped with ring mail, short swords and shields. He also commands 20 knights (3rd-level fighters), who fight on horseback with horseman's picks or maces and are armored in scale mail.

Sir Hiregaard appears in the adventure module *The Awakening* (9452) and the novel *The Enemy Within* (8063).

## Illithid God-brain

**Lord of Bluetspur**

| | |
|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 |
| Movement | 18 (Sw) |
| Level/Hit Dice | 20 |
| Hit Points | 99 |
| THAC0 | 11 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 |
| Damage/Attack | See below |
| Special Attacks | Psionics |
| Special Defenses | Psionics |
| Magic Resistance | Nil |

Little is known about this strange life form, except that it rules the island domain of Bluetspur. Its lair is believed to lie deep beneath Mount Makab, where it floats in a deep pool of brine. It is supposed to resemble a gigantic brain, although sages insist that it is a mass of smaller brains that have merged into one body.

**Background:** How this creature earned its twilight realm in the land of the Mists is untold. Bluetspur is a hostile domain in every sense, so exotic that it remained free of the Core after the Grand Conjunction collapsed, becoming the largest island of terror in the Demiplane of Dread.

**Current Sketch:** Those heroes who have escaped Bluetspur claim that the god-brain constantly intruded on their subconscious minds, drawing forth their darkest thoughts. It may be that the lord must live vicariously through other sentient beings, which would certainly be in keeping with the dark powers' predilection for torturing their captive domain masters.

**Combat:** The god-brain enjoys virtually unlimited Psionic Strength Points and it always achieves the result of having rolled the power score in all sciences and devotions (see *The Complete Psionics Handbook*). All psychic contests and saving throws vs. any of the lord's powers are made with a –10 penalty. The brain's psionic power contact is always made automatically, and no telepathic defenses, powers, or devices can prevent it.

The illithid god-brain of Bluetspur appears in the adventure module *Thoughts of Darkness* (9364).

## Lukas, Harkon

**Lord of Kartakass**
**7th-level Bard and Wolfwere, Neutral Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 8 (3) | Str | 14 (18) |
| Movement | 12 (15, 18 as wolf) | Dex | 16 |
| | | Con | 15 (18) |
| Level/Hit Dice | 7 | Int | 16 |
| Hit Points | 35 | Wis | 10 |
| THAC0 | 17 (13) | Cha | 18 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 (2) | | |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon or 2d6 (×2) | | |
| Special Attacks | Singing | | |
| Special Defenses | Iron or +1 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | 10% | | |

As a wolfwere Lukas can assume three different shapes at will: humanoid, half wolf, and dire wolf (each transformation takes one round). Dire wolf is his natural form, but Harkon does not favor it as do other wolfweres. As a humanoid he can choose which race to imitate and he can assume both a male and female form. His exact appearance in each race and gender is always the same, however, and is determined by greater powers. In the stat description above, the numbers in parentheses reflect his half-wolf state unless otherwise noted.

In human male form, Harkon is a bard of exceptional charisma and physical beauty. He stands 6′ 2″ tall, and he is well muscled with perfect proportions. He has thick, wavy black hair, a finely trimmed black beard, and a long, pointy mustache. He frequently wears a fine costume of azure silk trousers, a white ruffled shirt, and a gold coat. A wide-brimmed hat (blue, with a white feather) tops the costume. The baggy trousers are tucked into shiny, black leather riding boots. Bits of small jewelry—rings, necklaces, etc.—and a wide, black leather belt with silver buckle complete his dress. He may be encountered wearing almost any fancy costume, however. The only constants are a monocle (for which he has a strange affection), an elaborately carved harp, and a sword with a finely crafted basket hilt.

As a human female Lukas has dark brown eyes, a bewitching smile, and gleaming black hair that falls to the waist. Her feminine beauty is breathtaking. She wears loose scarlet pantaloons tucked in boots, a white flowing blouse, and a short open vest of gold brocade.

In half-wolf form Harkon stands 7 feet tall. His clothes, which fit his human form loosely, can accommodate the change. His head becomes that of a wolf and his body remains human, but covered with fur. He sprouts no claws, but sharp, canine fangs offset the loss.

**Background:** Lukas grew up in Cormyr, and he was a misfit among wolfweres. He asked too many questions and hated solitude, which was unnatural for his species. Also, unlike his

chaotic brethren, he made long-range plans. Larger and stronger than most of his kind, he was left to himself more and more—precisely the opposite of what he desired. When he reached adulthood, Lukas attempted to unify a group of wolfweres into a small tribe. Of course, the solitary creatures shunned him.

Lukas seethed with rage and embarked on a killing spree through the farmlands of Cormyr, venting his wrath on the innocent. When his rage cooled he decided to enter the world of men, for he realized that they were extremely expressive creatures, and that fascinated him. He became a wandering minstrel and bard for many years, killing mostly farm animals and vagrants. He felt superior to his kind, but he lacked purpose or significance.

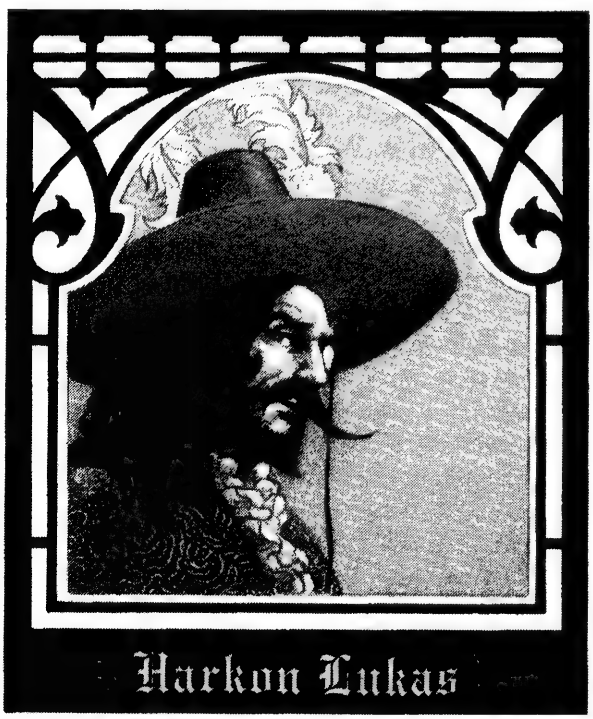
One fog-filled night in a small village, Lukas was strolling the streets and making evil plans. He was destined for greatness; of that he was sure. If he could not command his fellow wolfweres, he would become a ruler of men in Cormyr. Lost in thoughts of tyranny, he failed to notice when the village faded away and the landscape of Barovia took its place. The year was 610 on the Barovian calendar.

The fates had cursed him! Had they not swept him to this strange place in an attempt to rob him of his destiny? Of his strength? He was angry and desperate, and only the warm, familiar taste of blood seemed to calm him. For a long time he hunted and killed the wolves and werewolves that infested the mountainous landscape. Then, one night, he came face to face with Barovia's vampire lord, and Harkon Lukas barely escaped with his life by fleeing into the Mists. They welcomed him, creating a new domain. In 613 he became the lord of Kartakass.

**Current Sketch:** Harkon's greatest desire is to rule. He is clever, persistent, calculating, and quite capable of making long-range plans. Ravenloft gave him an entire domain to rule, and yet the dark powers filled it with nothing of consequence for him to control. Kartakass has only a few small villages and the forests are filled with normal wildlife. In his eyes, being the lord of Kartakass is a pale shadow of what real rulership means.

Most wolfweres are chaotic, but Harkon's alignment is neutral. Perhaps some vestige of normalcy remains, however, because his personality is subject to change. Usually Harkon is a jovial creature with an evil twinkle in his eye. Insults and sabre-rattling leave him unperturbed. If thwarted, however, he is subject to extreme mood swings. His fits of rage result in horrible violence that can last for days. He is always quiet and reclusive after such a fit, however. These periods of calm produce his most audacious plans.

Harkon has an abiding hatred of werewolves and vampires. He has been known to hunt and destroy these creatures, even if the hunt takes years. He has an affinity for humans and elves, but gets along well with any of the humanoid races. (However, he never lets such emotions get in the way of a good meal.)



Harkon Lukas

**Combat:** Harkon Lukas has all of the normal abilities of a 7th-level bard and a wolfwere—refer to the *Player's Handbook* and the *Monstrous Manual* for full details. Only weapons of +1 or greater enchantment, or weapons of iron, can harm wolfweres. (Most common swords are steel.)

The dark powers have given Lukas one additional ability: If he dies in combat his spirit enters the body of the nearest dire wolf. The wolf immediately gains all of Harkon's abilities and attributes, including total hit points. Harkon inherits the current state of the wolf's body, including injuries and spell effects. No one knows what will happen if he dies of old age. It hasn't happened yet, and in Ravenloft, it's possible that it never will. He has survived over 150 years to date.

Lukas can command any normal animal in his land, but he usually reserves this ability for the wolves, which are his favorites.

He carries an *elixir of madness*, which he brews himself. It is a weaker form of the normal potion and its effects can be countered with *neutralize poison* or the equivalent. His favorite tactic is to trick or entice a person to drink it. Once the victim is mad and confused, the wolfwere slowly eats him, trying to keep his victim conscious as long as possible.

The sword he carries is a *cursed berserker +1* that came from the land itself when Kartakass was born. When faced by enemies in melee, the sword forces its wielder to fight to the death, welding itself to his hand. When Harkon is not in combat, he can drop the sword and even leave it miles behind. But when he faces an enemy, the sword instantly appears in his hand and he is forced to fight to the death. The sword only functions this way if Lukas is in human or half-wolf form. If he is in wolf form, he has no hand to hold the sword. If Harkon is using the weapon, he cannot change to wolf form until the fight is over.

Harkon has learned to live with this curse and has developed strategies to make it work for him. For instance, when he "dies," his life force immediately inhabits the body of the nearest dire wolf. If he stays in wolf form, he can run if necessary, leaving the blade behind. The blade is permanently tied to him and will not recognize another owner, so the next time he faces an opponent in human or half-wolf form, the sword appears in his hand.

Lukas often uses the sword to play an evil trick: When he first meets a group of wanderers, he volunteers to leave his sword in the branches of a tree at least 100 yards away (as a sign of his good will and peaceful intentions). If that does not calm his victims, he offers to let them hold the sword. He knows that if a fight begins—even if he starts it—then the sword will appear instantly in his hand.

The harp he carries has a simple magical property. When Lukas plays certain melodies of his own composition upon the harp, the music draws 3d4 dire wolves from the outlying area. The beasts arrive in 2d6 rounds. Once they are within 60 feet of the wolfwere, the dire wolves recognize his scent and obey his commands. As a twisted joke, Lukas sometimes teaches one of these melodies to innocent travelers, and lets them summon their own fate.

As a bard Lukas has the following abilities: climb walls, 80%; detect noise, 50%; pick pockets, 30%; and read languages, 35%. He also can cast a few simple spells, which are listed below. The mix appears random and unplanned, because he acquires spells as the winds of fortune place them before him.

**Spell List**

1st level (3 per day): *Enlarge, grease, magic missile, phantasmal force, Tenser's floating disc*

2nd level (2 per day): *Darkness 15-foot radius, knock, spectral hand,*

3rd level (1 per day): *Gust of wind, vampiric touch*

Harkon Lukas appears in the adventure module *Feast of Goblyns* (9298) and in the novel *Heart of Midnight* (8059).

## Markov, Frantisek

**Lord of Markovia**
**0-level Human, Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 6* | Str | 19* |
| Movement | 12* | Dex | 18* |
| Level/Hit Dice | 5* | Con | 16* |
| Hit Points | 24 | Int | 17 |
| THAC0 | 15* | Wis | 9 |
| No. of Attacks | 2* | Cha | 8 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d4 (×2) | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

* Variable score

Frantisek is a large man, with thick heavy bones, broad features, and coarse straight black hair that he wears slicked back on his head. His eyebrows are large and bushy, and his jaw is large and wide. His green eyes are fixed wide open, as if he's afraid to miss any detail. He has a broad, toothy smile that he flashes often, but it is far from reassuring. It is actually threatening and predatory—like a cougar's sudden roar, but silent.

Frantisek always wears a heavy, high-necked robe which he sometimes adorns with a necklace of human or animal teeth. He appears massive and lumbering, with a broad, slightly hunched back. His arms are unusually long and his legs are visibly bowed beneath his robe.

**Background:** The Markovs lived in Barovia when Strahd became a vampire. Some of them died in Castle Ravenloft, but the others fled to nearby Vallaki. Frantisek grew up on a small pig farm outside that village, surrounded by the forested slopes of Barovia.

Frantisek butchered swine for sale at market. He liked the work and had a natural talent for it. When he came of age, he married a young woman from the village and opened a butcher shop there. As time wore on, though, he became bored with simple slaughter. He began to experiment with the animals, performing surgical amputations, grafts, and glandular injections. Of course they all died within a few days, but the hobby cost him nothing—he could still grind the meat for sale.

His wife, a buxom and kind-hearted woman named Ludmilla, soon discovered his ghastly pastime, and the experiments revolted her. She threatened to leave him and tell the villagers what kind of perverted meat they were buying. Furious at the betrayal, Frantisek made her his next experiment—Ludmilla lived for three days.

When the townsfolk discovered her body, they thought it was the body of a beast or demon, but eventually reason—and Ludmilla's strange disappearance—led them to the truth. They exiled Frantisek to the Mists and he became lord of Markovia.

**Current Sketch:** Ravenloft formed a land suited to Markov's nature and gave him the power to continue his work. He can operate on any creature and combine it with the aspects of

any other species. Most of his experiments have created broken ones (sse the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 [2122]). The simplest creatures in Markovia are animals who have acquired human qualities. Others are (or were) humans, who have acquired bestial attributes through Frantisek's handiwork.

Ravenloft also cursed Markov. He must always have the body of a beast, himself, and so, like his creations, he is hideously deformed. Frantisek desperately wants to be a normal human again. He spends long hours in his lab vivisecting animals and transforming them into animal men, hoping to discover a means to untangle his twisted genes. Lately human subjects are in short supply, for the Grand Conjunction played a cruel trick upon him by transporting his domain into the Sea of Sorrows. Now he is further cut off from human subjects than ever, and he longs for more. He hopes that his experiments will give him the knowledge he needs to cure his condition—to make himself man from beast—but he is doomed to failure. He can never undo the curse that Ravenloft's powers set upon him.

**Combat:** Markov is a shapechanger who can assume any animal form. The transformation requires a full round, but he can do it at will. Each change heals 2d6 hit points. He takes on the physical characteristics of the animal he resembles, including Hit Dice, Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. His mental attributes remain the same, however (as in the 9th-level spell *shape change*).

The dark powers have imposed some interesting restrictions on this power: Markov cannot assume a true human form, nor can he take the shape of *any* humanoid creature (elf, dwarf, half-elf, lizard man, etc.)—he can only can assume the form of a normal animal, not of a magical or enchanted creature. No matter which animal he becomes, however, Frantisek always retains his own human head and face. Among other things, that means he never gains a biting attack. He can choose to retain his own hands or assume the paws of the animal he becomes. As a rule Frantisek chooses the form of a gorilla because he can still appear human (though bulky and lumbering) beneath his loose robes. In fact, some folk mistake him for a hunchback or a similarly deformed creature, and even pity him. The numbers above reflect his abilities as an ape.

Markov appears in the novel *Tapestry of Dark Souls* (8065).

## Misroi, Anton

**Lord of Souragne**
**Zombie Lord, Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 6 | Str | 15 |
| Movement | 6 | Dex | 9 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 6 | Con | 14 |
| Hit Points | 45 | Int | 16 |
| THAC0 | 15 | Wis | 8 |
| No. of Attacks | 2 | Cha | 4 |
| Damage/Attack | 2d4/2d4 | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Anton Misroi is a living creature who has taken the foul appearance and powers of an undead creature. His skin is pale gray and rotting from his body, and a horrible odor of decay surrounds him. Despite his terrible corporeal state, he dresses in the habit of nobility.

**Background:** Misroi was once the master of a huge plantation. He was powerful, wealthy, and thoroughly ruthless with everyone in his life. He kept many slaves and treated them despotically for the sheer joy of wielding power. Anton dealt harshly with enemies and insubordinate (in his estimation) servants. He had a group of brutal thugs at his command, who snatched his victims in the night and took them into the nearby swamps, where they were fed to the alligators or held underwater with poles until they drowned.

One day Misroi entered his mansion and found his wife in the arms of a neighboring

plantation owner. In truth, she had been weeping at her miserable state of existence and the gentleman had merely been comforting her, but Misroi assumed that they were lovers. He called his henchmen and had them taken to his favorite murdering spot: a patch of quicksand that was barely deep enough to cover a man's head. The murderers threw them in and then left Anton alone to enjoy their pleas for mercy.

The two of them went down slowly in the shallow pool, and the gentleman ultimately bade Misroi's wife to climb upon his shoulders and survive while he went under. Anton waited until the man had drowned and then took a pole and pushed his wife under himself. She cursed him as she went under, mud and sand spraying from her lips, and the dark powers heard her cries. The swamp grew deathly quiet for a moment, then the two murder victims suddenly reached out of the quicksand and yanked Anton in with them.

"I don't want to die!" he screamed as they tugged at him. "Don't let me die!" he cried to the heavens, and the dark powers responded. They transformed Anton into a zombie lord (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 [2122]) and allowed him to crawl free of the pool. He lived, but he became for all practical purposes an undead thing. Anton stumbled back to his plantation, but the slaves rose up against the "invading monster" and drove Anton back to the swamp. Meanwhile, the mists on the brackish waters grew thick and blind, and the island of terror called Souragne was created.

**Current Sketch:** Misroi now lives in the swamps. He is not all-powerful within his domain like other darklords are, but he will never die of natural causes. He remains a creature of the night. His greatest desire is to recapture his humanity, but that is forever denied by the dark powers.

Anton is capable of disappearing into the swamps by stepping into a tree or sinking into the ground as if he were ethereal. Doing so immediately restores him to full hit points, so he is very difficult to kill. Were he to be lured out of the swamp and destroyed, it is speculated that Souragne would cease to exist.

**Combat:** Aside from the above-mentioned special abilities, Anton Misroi is in every respect a normal zombie lord as defined in the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 1 (2122).

Souragne is the setting of the adventure module *Night of the Walking Dead* (9352) and the novel *Dance of the Dead* (8058).

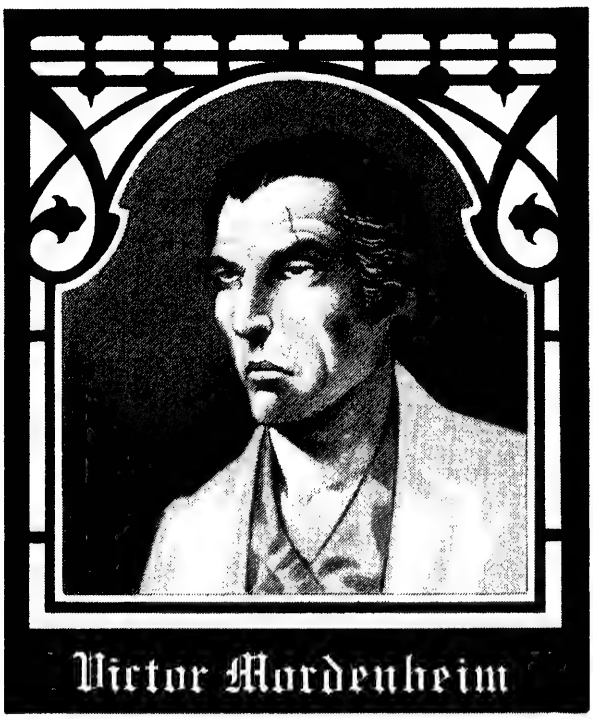
## Mordenheim, Victor

**Human (0-level), Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 10 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 17 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 0 | Con | 9 |
| Hit Points | 55 | Int | 18 |
| THAC0 | 20 | Wis | 7 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 12 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Nil | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Mordenheim, a scientist and surgeon, is 34 years of age. He is 6 feet tall and has a wiry but not athletic stature. His sharp, pronounced features belie an aristocratic background. (His father was a lord with considerable holdings.) Though his face is still relatively young, an intense obsession with his work has grayed his hair prematurely; only a few streaks of the original brown remain. A meager, conservative diet and reclusive lifestyle have left his skin pale and somewhat anemic. His blue eyes are tired and muddied; they rarely blink and have the distant look of a man preoccupied with matters other than those he sees before him.

Tension plagues him. His facial muscles are tight and sometimes twitch; his lips never relax in a smile. The tendons on the back of his hands are taut and raised, and the thin dry skin covering his knuckles is as white as the bones




below. He flexes his fingers when anxious or agitated. He is a man on the edge and looks it. But when his agitation rises and he seems near a breaking point, the expected rage never comes. Instead, just for a moment, he appears to tremble. Then his fragile composure returns.

Mordenheim has a distinguishing scar and two small deformities. A fall from a tree at age 5 left a scar on his forehead that is still faintly visible today. His left earlobe is missing due to another childhood mishap: At age 10 he was attempting to perform simple exploratory surgery on his father's favorite hound. The dog, not fully drugged by the bowl of wine that young Victor provided, retaliated the moment its skin was cut. Victor's father refused to have the boy's dangling earlobe reattached. Instead, he instructed the family doctor to remove the lobe completely as a lesson to the little surgeon. Another accident, at age 23, claimed the tip of Mordenheim's left ring finger. He severed it himself when using a surgical saw—an error for which he chides himself to this day. Dr. Mordenheim wears only simple, practical brown woolen suits, never any of the frills or embellishments others of his social status might acquire. In his lab he dons a surgical gown to protect his garments from blood and other fluids. He wears no jewelry other than a ring with his family crest and a gold watch and chain that were given to him by his wife.

**Background:** Mordenheim is Ravenloft's "Dr. Frankenstein," loosely based on the character from Mary Shelley's classic novel. He is a gifted scientist and surgeon who became obsessed with the pursuit of knowledge at an early age. Other boys played make-believe and then later played at love; Victor only studied the sciences, both modern and arcane. He disdained magic, however, having deemed it "a diversion from Truth."

At age 21, Mordenheim married Elise von Brandthofen, much to the surprise of his family and his handful of friends. Were it not for Elise's own persistence, he would never have met, much less married, her. She was an unusual and intelligent young woman who shared his interest (though not his passion) for Chemistry. Unfortunately she was barren, and therefore could not give him children.

Only a few months after marrying Elise, Victor began his research into the resurrection—or more appropriately, the creation—of human life. Thirteen years later he accomplished his goal and created a monster. Mordenheim discovered virtually every piece of the puzzle he pursued. One fateful night, he did indeed have every cell in his carefully constructed corpse primed for revival.

But the actual spark, the true wonder, was not an accomplishment all his own. He was dabbling in the work of gods, and the gods, in turn, dabbled in his.

Mordenheim neither worshiped nor believed in any power higher than man. He was a learned atheist who accepted only that which could be proved. He believed neither in evil nor in good. If he revered anything, it was

knowledge, particularly his own. It cannot be said that he worshiped wisdom.

At other times, in other places, the gods might have tolerated such blasphemy. As was their way, they might have protected such a man from his own ignorance. But Mordenheim had become a festering sore to their sensibilities. So fierce became his desire to create life, so strong his denial of their existence, that the gods decided to grant his wish. They imbued his foul corpse with a soul that was troubled and twisted, and rife with evil intent. Then the gods relinquished all ties to the surgeon's fate, casting both him and his dark joke of creation adrift.

All souls eventually fall under the sway of one power or another. Mordenheim and his monster were soon reclaimed. On the night the monster first drew breath, Ravenloft's misty fingers began to tingle with anticipation. In the months that followed they settled into the soil about Mordenheim's castle, until at last they rose from the earth and surrounded it in a kind of deathwatch. When all hope of Mordenheim's redemption was past, the mists withdrew from that primal realm, taking with them the castle and all the players in Mordenheim's deadly plot. Today, they share a domain in Ravenloft.

**Current Sketch:** To the local inhabitants Dr. Mordenheim is a fiendish madman who conducts unholy experiments in a castle by the sea. They fear him and credit him with powers that he does not actually possess. They also credit him with crimes he does not commit. It is true, however, that he robs the graveyards and haunts the hospices in search of feminine bodies that are newly cold. He has, perhaps, even arranged a gentle death, using poisons that cause no pain and leave nary a trace. But he does not kidnap specimens that are yet warm. That, unknown to most of the populace and Mordenheim himself, is the work of his brainchild, the monster he named Adam. (See "Mordenheim's Monster" for details.)

Mordenheim's days and many of his nights are still devoted to his science, but he no longer seeks to revive the dead. He seeks to restore the living, for shortly after he gave it life, his creature struck down his wife with a blow that should have killed her. Elise—or what is left of her—still breathes in his laboratory. (It would be a mockery to call it "life.") Compelled by remorse and what must truly now be madness, he intends to provide her with a new body that all but surpasses perfection. She has regained consciousness only twice since her fateful encounter with Adam. In those brief moments she cried out for her adopted daughter Eva (whom the monster kidnapped after he attacked Elise) and begged Victor to release her from torment. Her heart continues to beat, but not of its own accord. She lives solely through the intervention of Mordenheim's contraptions. Even if he could make her eyes shine with life again, it is doubtful he would see his Elise behind them. Instead, he would behold a creature even more horrid to him than his first experiment. But Victor has blinded himself to this, just as he has blinded himself to the fact that his experiments are doomed to fail.

Without the intervention of the gods that spurned him, Victor will never again revive the lifeless. Perhaps some part of him knows this. In his endless quest for perfect parts, in his eternal wait for the perfect moment, he is able to deny the truth: that his work is a failure, that Elise is gone to him forever, and he is as much her murderer as the wretch who struck her down.

**Combat:** Dr. Mordenheim is not likely to start a fight. He is a surgeon and has no weapon skills. However, his link to the monster has given him a strange defensive ability. He cannot die unless the monster dies. In fact, he has the hit points of the monster and his body will similarly regenerate from the slightest piece of flesh. Meanwhile, the pain from his wounds is felt by the monster. If Mordenheim's body disintegrates completely, his spirit will

seek out the fresh corpse of another human male. Within a week, the new body will change until it looks just like the old Dr. Mordenheim.

Those who would like to know more about the obsessive scientist should read the novel *Mordenheim* (8064).

## Mordenheim's Monster, 'Adam'

**Lord of Lamordia**
**Flesh Golem, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 20 |
| Movement | 15 | Dex | 17 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 12 | Con | 20 |
| Hit Points | 55 | Int | 16 |
| THAC0 | 9 | Wis | 12 |
| No. of Attacks | 2 | Cha | 2 |
| Damage/Attack | 2d8 | | |
| Special Attacks | Nil | | |
| Special Defenses | +1 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | 25% | | |

The monster Adam is a patchwork of body parts from different human corpses—each part perfect, the whole grotesque. Large, raised scars crisscross his body and face like the lines on a distorted jigsaw puzzle. He is an enormous, tremendously powerful man, standing more than 7 feet tall.

Adam's skin is gray and pale, and it's too thin to conceal the play of muscles and arteries underneath. At the edge of his eyes and mouth, the skin is bluish and shrivelled. His hair is raven black, flowing long and wild to his shoulders. Thin, straight black lips frame his perfect, pearly white teeth. His watery blue eyes look too small for the sockets; the lids scarcely cover them and the eyeballs seem loosely anchored.

**Background:** Dr. Victor Mordenheim created Adam from the parts of many dead men and then gave him life. The creature was childlike at first, yet it had been infused with an evil spirit, to which Mordenheim remained ignorant until too late. As the dark powers drew Lamordia into the Demiplane of Dread, Adam grew increasingly cruel, until he at last murdered the doctor's wife Elise, kidnapped their adopted daughter Eva, and fled into the Mists. That night he became the true lord of Lamordia, and the land welcomed him.

**Current Sketch:** Adam has control over the borders and is the most powerful character in his domain. He is not Lamordia's political leader, however. Baron von Aubrecker, a member of the local aristocracy, is the apparent ruler. The Baron and the natives in Lamordia believe they dwell in a land whose history reaches back to the beginnings of time, and perhaps they do. But until Adam and Dr. Mordenheim became part of Ravenloft, Lamordia did not exist in the demiplane.

The monster now lives as a recluse, usually dwelling in a cave on the Isle of Agony. He is immune to cold and needs little food or water to sustain him. Hence he can live as wildly and freely as an animal. But he does not want to be a beast, he wants to be human. He is bitter and

frustrated, and when the emotion builds it gives way to violence and evil.

Adam despises Dr. Mordenheim, but cannot bring himself to harm his creator. The land has bound them together in body and spirit. The monster feels the doctor's physical pain, and the doctor in turn shares the monster's eternal anguish.

**Combat:** As the true lord of Lamordia, Adam has been granted many powers by the land. He is immune to natural cold and electricity, but suffers half damage from magical attacks of this type. Other damaging spells harm him normally. Spells that do not cause immediate damage are absorbed; he can use their energy to regenerate hit points (1 point for each level of the spell). Adam also is immune to normal weapons and physical attacks. Only magical weapons can harm him.

The monster resembles neither a common flesh golem nor a lumbering dolt with neck bolts. He is extremely nimble, swift, and clever, using the terrain to superb advantage. He is a creature accustomed to living at the edge of another man's world, and thus is willing to retreat if danger is present, allowing the land and its shadows to conceal him. Time is meaningless to Adam, for he always can return to fight another day.

The monster prefers guerilla tactics over full frontal assaults. Like a thief he can hide in shadows and move silently, with an 80% chance of success. He can also detect noise and climb walls with the same odds. While moving silently his movement rate is halved. If he absorbs an opponent's spell, he may pretend that the spell has worked, using the falsehood to position himself for an escape or a surprise attack. He has a 50% chance of knowing which spell has been cast upon him.

Adam is tightly linked to his creator, Dr. Mordenheim. He can feel any pain inflicted upon the doctor, though it does not affect his ability to fight or move.

Those who would like to confront Adam and Dr. Mordenheim may do so by playing *Adam's Wrath* (9439). Still others who enjoy golem adventures should consider exploring the adventure module *The Created* (9414).

## Petrovna, Yagno

**Lord of G'Henna**
**11th-level Priest, Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 13 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 11 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 11 | Con | 14 |
| Hit Points | 45 | Int | 12 |
| THAC0 | 14 | Wis | 15 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 18 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Poison touch (see below) | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Yagno has a long, pale narrow face with features that are more like thin lines than three-dimensional protrusions. His eyes usually are opened just a slit and appear pink because they are bloodshot. His thin lips spread into a wide, flat grimace. Yagno always wears priestly garb, usually red or orange silk robes, like other clergymen of G'Henna. A tight-fitting hood leaves only his face exposed. Atop the hood he wears a cap with strange, stiff folds. A braided cord worked with beads drapes over his left shoulder and runs under his right arm like a sash. The smallest beads are human teeth.

**Background:** The Petrovna family lived in Barovia when the region became part of the land of the Mists. Some of them are buried in Castle Ravenloft, but others managed to survive a few generations in the mountains, away from that evil castle. Isolation led to inbreeding.

Yagno was born in 674, and even as a child his family described him as "not right." His brothers humiliated and beat him. Alone or skulking in corners, Yagno babbled to imaginary people and cowered before

imaginary beasts. At age 22 he built an altar in a cave and began sacrificing animals there. At 27 he attempted to do the same to his sister's newborn child, so the Petrovna family chased him into the Mists. Ravenloft welcomed Yagno and made for him a land in which he could continue where he left off in Barovia: worshiping a false god of his own creation.

**Current Sketch:** Yagno believes that he is in communication with a powerful creature named Zhakata, and his entire domain is built around the worship of this false god.

**Combat:** Yagno is an 11th-level priest of Zhakata and a master of the dagger. (Zhakata is not real; Ravenloft grants Petrovna his spells.) His spheres are All, Charm, Combat, Elemental, Healing (reversed only), and Summoning. He has a special ability that allows him to change a humanoid into a mongrelman (see the *Monstrous Manual*). He can do this three times per day merely by raking his fingers across their temples and chest. There is no saving throw. Yagno can reverse the process at any time with another touch, although he never does. The only way to be restored is by a *polymorph other* spell or by casting *remove curse* during a wind storm. To date he has only transformed natives of Ravenloft in this manner; it is suspected that he cannot transform visitors from other realms with the same success.

Yagno's voice is charming. When he speaks, anyone listening for more than 10 minutes must successfully save vs. spell or become loyal to him and Zhakata. At the beginning of each full day, another saving throw is allowed to break the enchantment. The charm helps Yagno ensure his followers' loyalty.

## Renier, Jacqueline

**Lord of Richemulot**
**Wererat, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 (6) | Str | 11 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 16 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 3+1 | Con | 15 |
| Hit Points | 16 | Int | 15 |
| THAC0 | 17 | Wis | 9 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 17 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Surprise | | |
| Special Defenses | Silver or +1 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Jacqueline is a wererat, beautiful but sinister in human form, with just a hint of ratlike features. Her hair is black and sleek, and her eyes are green with flecks of gold. She tends to dress simply, avoiding extravagance.

**Background:** Jacqueline was a young girl when her family discovered a portal into Ravenloft. A team of dogs and vigilante swordsmen was pursuing them through the sewers beneath the city. In desperation, the family fled deeper into the labyrinth, into the forbidden, unexplored catacombs. The barking of hounds and the bellowing of the wererats'

pursuers echoed throughout the labyrinth. Finally, the Reniers were cornered. Before them lay certain death by a glowing sword. Behind, in an open vault, lay a strange portal filled with mist. They chose the mists.

The family entered Ravenloft on the borders of Falkovnia and quickly made their home in the passages beneath the town of Silbervas. Many years later, Drakov finally tired of the wererats' murdering and pilfering. He dispatched a huge expeditionary force that swept through the sewers, exterminating every creature they encountered. Some of the wererats escaped to the countryside, and the Reniers were among them. Drakov had anticipated this flight, and his horsemen were ready, so the Reniers fled into the Mists once more, this time with pounding hooves only a few strides behind them.

The Mists opened up new lands for Jacqueline and her family. Her grandfather Claude became lord of Richemulot. The family found the land to their liking, for it appeared complete with cities and sewers. Jacqueline was a dark star, schooled well by her evil father. In the year 726 of the Barovian calendar she murdered him and took control of the domain. Since then, the population has grown with the arrival of refugees from other lands.

**Current Sketch:** Jacqueline is domineering, manipulative, and mean. She revels in her animal nature. Rats are lusty creatures, and so is Jacqueline. Her curse in Ravenloft is to automatically revert to rat-man form in the presence of anyone she loves. Normally this would not have affected her—wererats usually do not form bonds of love and marriage—but it also has been Jacqueline's curse to fall in love. She is enamored of a human male named Henri DuBois. Since her last unsuccessful attempt to make him her wererat slave, his whereabouts are unknown.

**Combat:** Jacqueline enjoys all of the normal powers ascribed to a wererat (see the *Monstrous Manual*). In addition, she can become a foul-smelling mist at will. She does not, however, smell like a sewer when in human form, and neither do members of her family. If wounded to the point of death, she automatically assumes gaseous form and flees. Jacqueline regains 1 hit point per day while in this form. She remains gaseous until her total hit points rise above 0 once more.

Regardless of form, Lord Renier can climb any surface, including glass, and she even can cling to the ceiling. When not in human form she can gnaw through virtually any material, if given time. Anyone she injures has a 10% chance per point of damage of becoming a wererat, under her control.

## Shinpi

**Lord of Rokushima**
**Geist, Lawful Evil**

| | |
|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 |
| Movement | Fl 12(A) |
| Level/Hit Dice | Nil |
| Hit Points | Nil |
| THAC0 | Nil |
| No. of Attacks | 0 |
| Damage/Attack | Nil |
| Special Attacks | Sight causes panic |
| Special Defenses | Invulnerable |
| Magic Resistance | 100% |

Shinpi is possibly the demiplane's most impotent of lords, for he is a mere geist (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 3 [2153], available in November of 1994, or consult the original RAVENLOFT *Realm of Terror* boxed set), forever cursed to be a witness to the events in his land. All that he can do as a lord is close the borders of his domain.

**Background:** Shinpi lived his life according to the dictates of oriental chivalry, the *bushido,* yet often he twisted its principles in order to divide his enemies against themselves and crush them with despair. His greatest sense of honor lay in the solidarity of his own clan while others fell apart due to his subtle treachery.

Shortly before he died, Shinpi called his six sons to him and divided his lands and treasures between them. With that final task done, he closed his eyes and let out a last hiss of breath, yet before his body cooled the sons began to bicker over their father's estate, portending war such as Shinpi had inflicted upon others. That night a wall of impossibly thick fog rolled in from the sea, and the new domain of Rokushima surfaced in the Mists.

Within a fortnight of Shinpi's death the youngest of his sons was slain by ninja, and before the next full moon the eldest son had fallen as well. Both deaths were followed within an hour by a fierce earthquake that caused the islands they ruled to crumble into the ocean. As the quakes ended, the earth shifted and the other islands closed the circle about the Ookfi Kagamiko (the Great Mirror Lake).

**Current Sketch:** As a geist Shinpi watches in anguish while his hard-won empire is torn to pieces by civil war. In fortresses on each of their respective islands, each of the four remaining brothers lives in paranoic fear of his siblings. From time to time the conflict between the four surviving princes breaks into a full-blown clash of armies, but most often it involves attempts to poison or otherwise assassinate one another. Meanwhile, Shinpi's ghost desires nothing more than an end to this rift among his children, but as one of the most physically impotent of darklords, he is able to exert only the most minor of efforts toward this goal. So far his best efforts have ended in utter failure, which keeps Rokushima firmly rooted in Ravenloft—it is impossible to say what would happen if peace were restored.

**Combat:** As they are completely insubstantial, geists are incapable of engaging in combat, but they are invulnerable to attack for the same reason.

## Sodo

**Lord of Zherisia**
**Ravenloft Doppleganger, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 5 | Str | 19 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 18 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 5 | Con | 16 |
| Hit Points | 40 | Int | 18 |
| THAC0 | 15 | Wis | 17 |
| No. Attacks | 1 | Cha | 10 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d12 per round | | |
| Special Attacks | Strangulation | | |
| Special Defenses | +5 weapon to hit (see below) | | |
| Magic Resistance | 90% immunity to all damaging spells (see below) | | |

Although he is a Ravenloft doppleganger, with all of the abilities of that race to mimic any humanoid form, Sodo is unable to hold a single shape for more than a few moments. At best (when he is calm), he can hold a shape for a full minute. At worst (when he is agitated or excited), he flickers from shape to shape every two or three seconds. Many of the humanoid shapes Sodo assumes are bestial and horrific; seeing him is cause for a horror check.

**Background:** Sodo originally belonged to a clan of dopplegangers on a distant world of the Prime Material Plane. Sodo, his fellow clan members, and his city were drawn into Ravenloft when he committed a crime that was extremely foul–even by doppleganger standards.

Sodo's crime was to kill off, in a series of carefully arranged "accidents," all the dopplegangers in the clan who were older than himself. After disposing of all the other elders, Sodo killed the clan leader, hid the body, and assumed the form that the leader normally mimicked. When confronted by suspicious younger members of his clan, Sodo used his mimicry in a devious way–he mimicked the natural form of the doppleganger elder, adding extra creases under his eyes to make himself into the image of the aged clan leader.

Normally, when a doppleganger reverts to its true form, it is clearly distinguishable from any other doppleganger. It is not able to mimic another doppleganger's true form. But Sodo had magical help: a *hat of disguise.*

When Sodo and the city of Paridon were drawn into Ravenloft, Sodo was rewarded with the ability to mimic any humanoid shape, even that of a fellow doppleganger's true form. At the same time, he was cursed to be forever shifting shape–and to heal anyone he harms.

Since the Grand Conjunction, Paridon has become the entire domain of Zherisia. As a result some confusion may exist when referring to the domain. As a rule, natives still call their city Paridon, but sages from other domains tend to refer to it as Zherisia (which is the name by which it is called in this boxed set).

**Current Sketch:** For decades Sodo has been the undisputed leader of all Paridon's doppleganger clans, but now he is in a precarious position. The head of one of those clans (Sir Edmund Bloodsworth) has betrayed him. Not only is Bloodsworth in league with a pack of jackalweres, he has also claimed as his own the *fang of the nosferatu*, the magical knife that has granted Sodo invulnerability for the past 156 years (see page 133 in *Realm of Terror* for more information about the *fang*). If Sir Edmund succeeds in obtaining the invulnerability the knife bestows, there will be nothing left to stop him from deposing Sodo and becoming the new lord of Zherisia.

**Combat:** Sodo has the usual *ESP* powers of a Ravenloft doppleganger, but he is addicted to the pain and terror of his victims. He must experience these emotions regularly (every five days) or suffer intense pain himself.

To feed on the suffering of his victims, Sodo must touch them. Because it is difficult for him to accurately aim a weapon as he rapidly shifts shape, he prefers to strangle his victims. (He's usually able to hang on long enough to do the job.) At the same time, Sodo's touch eases pain and ultimately *resurrects* any who die (as per the *resurrection* spell but without any aging

or weakening of Sodo). As a result, his victims survive his attacks, no matter how violent. Most believe they have suffered a frightening nightmare.

Sodo is featured in the adventure module *Hour of the Knife* (9452).

## Soth

**Lord of Sithicus**
**Death Knight, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 0 | Str | 18/99 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 14 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 9 | Con | 17 |
| Hit Points | 89 | Int | 10 |
| THAC0 | 5 | Wis | 9 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 17 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 75% (see below) | | |

Lord Soth, a death knight (see the *Monstrous Manual*), speaks with a hollow, chilling voice. His eyes glow red behind the visor of his helm, and he wears black *plate mail +3* (which reduces his AC to –3). His emblem, a black rose, can be seen embroidered on his clothing and embossed on his shield.

**Background:** Soth is well known for his exploits in the DRAGONLANCE® saga, where his desire to possess the beautiful and deadly Kitiara ruled him. In fact, it was his response to what he believed was her voice that led him into the dark world of Ravenloft. There, he met Strahd von Zarovich and sought to find his way back to Krynn before the Mists created Sithicus for him. (This story is fully told in the RAVENLOFT novel *Knight of the Black Rose* [8057]).

**Current Sketch:** Lord Soth now reigns from Nedragaard Keep. A true gift of the dark powers, the castle taunts him mercilessly, for it constantly changes size and shape so that he cannot maintain the sheer military order to which he is accustomed.

Soth's greatest desire is still to possess Kitiara, so he constantly seeks a means of escape from the Demiplane of Dread. Of course, he will never leave the land of the Mists, so he endlessly wanders over his domain, pursuing yet never quite catching more than echoes of what he believes to be his love and obsession.

**Combat:** Soth enjoys all traits ascribed to death knights as outlined in the *Monstrous Manual.*

## The Three Hags

Tepest is a unique domain in Ravenloft because it has *three* lords, although they are all hags. Their statistics are as follows:

**Laveeda**
**Annis, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 0 | Str | 19 |
| Movement | 18 | Dex | 16 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 7+7 | Con | 17 |
| Hit Points | 78 | Int | 14 |
| THAC0 | 13 | Wis | 15 |
| No. of Attacks | 3 | Cha | 3 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d8+8/1d8+8/2d4+1 | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 20% | | |

**Leticia**
**Sea Hag, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 2 | Str | 19 |
| Movement | 18, Sw 15 | Dex | 16 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 5 | Con | 17 |
| Hit Points | 39 | Int | 12 |
| THAC0 | 15 | Wis | 13 |
| No. of Attacks | 2 | Cha | 3 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d4+6/2d4+2 | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 50% | | |

**Lorinda**
**Greenhag, Neutral Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | –2 | Str | 18/51 |
| Movement | 18, Sw 12 | Dex | 16 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 9 | Con | 16 |
| Hit Points | 81 | Int | 14 |
| THAC0 | 11 | Wis | 18 |
| No. of Attacks | 2 | Cha | 3 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d2+6/1d2+6 | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 35% | | |

Like all hags, the three sisters can change shape at will, assuming any appearance that they like. However, no shape *really* pleases them, for they always see themselves and each other as they truly are: hideous, wretched, skinny creatures, somewhat like hunch-backed old women, with wrinkling and baggy skin, pointed noses, sharp black teeth, and warts. In addition, each of them shares common characteristics with other hags of their respective types (see the *Monstrous Manual*).

**Background:** The three hags were first known to have been left upon the porch of Rudella Mindefisk by fairies, in response to her ardent wish for daughters. Although her husband Holger, a farmer, had no use for "weakling daughters," she insisted on raising them. The girls were weak and sickly at first, as their reluctant adoptive father feared, but they strengthened as time went on. Meanwhile, Rudella sickened and eventually died, as if the children had drained her vitality.

After his wife's death, Holger set about ridding himself of the girls, but all attempts to do so failed. Eventually, he accepted the fact that they could not be dismissed and grouchily demanded only that they keep his house tidy and cook meals for him and his sons.

Often left to themselves, the girls spent much time plotting how they would leave the farm behind, but they believed that they needed gold to make it on their own and knew not where to get it. Then a wealthy man sought shelter at the farm one stormy night, and they murdered him for his money. Rather than bury the body, though, they cooked it into stew and served it to their unsuspecting father and brothers. That plan worked so well that they continued the practice for several years.

Eventually they decided that they could not make enough money this way, so they thought they would entice some traveler to take them away. Before long, a roguish dandy came along, but he had no intention of taking any of them away with him. Instead, he played them against each other masterfully, until their jealousy for one another peaked. Ultimately they murdered him together so that none would lose him. As they did so, the Mists claimed them and deposited them in the new domain of Tepest.

**Current Sketch:** The hags have not been in Ravenloft long, and they are not well known among any natives or travelers. The goblins that plague their domain are a more immediate and visible threat, and those carnivorous humanoids are always blamed for the disappearance of natives and travelers. In fact, the hags are responsible for many of those deaths, for they have become gourmet cannibals. They use much bewitching trickery to ensnare their victims, then take them back to their innocent-looking whitewashed cottage in the woods for dinner.

**Combat:** The sisters have ravenous appetites, but they feed for pleasure more than for survival. Each hag can devour an entire man-sized creature in 10 minutes. Their steely claws and incredible strengths help them finish the job quickly.

Each hag can mimic the voice of any creature, but after two rounds of doing so, there is a 35% chance that she will cackle strangely. Each sister also has the natural ability to change shape and size at will (as the wizard spell *shape change*). If and when one of them reveals her true appearance to an unsuspecting victim, he or she may be called upon to make

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a horror check. If the check is passed, then a fear check can follow.

Casting *together*, the sisters can invoke the following magic: *animate dead*, *control weather*, *curse*, *dream*, *forcecage*, *mindblank*, *polymorph other*, *veil*, and *vision*. They can use these spells twice per day, casting as if they were 9th-level mages. As darklords, they need not be within 10 feet of each other as they cast; rather, they can do so no matter where each of them is within the domain. They can do this because they are telepathically linked. The connection is natural and instantaneous, although engaging one of them in battle or any other preoccupying activity prevents them all from casting their group spells.

Singly each sister can cast the following spells at will, once per round: *audible glamer*, *fog cloud*, *invisibility*, *pass without trace*, *speak with monsters*, and *weakness*.

Each hag has her own abilities as well. Laveeda, the annis, can smell human flesh a half-mile away, and up to a mile away if the wind blows the scent to her. If she has seen the person she scents before, she can identify who it is by smell. Her hearing is so acute that she cannot be surprised. If she makes three successful attacks in a single round, she has grappled her opponent; all subsequent attacks automatically hit as she heartily rakes and chews her victim alive.

Leticia, the sea hag, can cast a *deadly glance*, up to three times per day, upon any creature within 30 feet. If the victim fails a saving throw vs. poison, there is a 25% chance that he or she dies of sheer horror and a 75% that he or she becomes paralyzed for three days.

Lorinda, the greenhag, can move through the forest in absolute silence, and she imposes a –5 penalty upon opponents' surprise rolls in that environment.

Mirrors and sunlight are the sisters' least favorite things, as the former crack whenever one of them looks into one (much to their embarrassment and rage) and the latter is painful and prevents their ability to shapechange (although it inflicts but 1 point of damage per *turn*).

The three hags are covered in much more detail in the *Darklords* accessory (9331). They also appear in the novel *Tapestry of Dark Souls* (8060).

## Timothy, Alfred

**Lord of Verbrek**
**6th-level Priest and Werewolf, Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 (5) | Str | 10 (16) |
| Movement | 12 (15) | Dex | 12 (15) |
| Level/Hit Dice | 6 | Con | 14 (18) |
| Hit Points | 35 | Int | 12 |
| THAC0 | 18 (15) | Wis | 18 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 14 |
| Damage/Attack | 2d4 | | |
| Special Attacks | Surprise | | |
| Special Defenses | Silver or +1 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | 25% | | |

In human form Timothy is a young man who looks slightly frail. The appearance is deceiving, for as a werewolf Timothy is not weak. In every form he wears a gold necklace with a small pendant shaped like a crescent moon.

**Background:** Alfred is the son of Nathan Timothy, the one-time lord of Arkandale who now merely captains a riverboat on the Musarde and Arden Rivers and their tributaries. Alfred believed that his father was overly tolerant of humans, and he was jealous of his father's power, but Lord Nathan paid his son little attention. Frustrated, Alfred left Arkandale as a young man. For a while, he wandered through Ravenloft, much as his father had done before him, seeking his fortune and fate.

One night, after many hours of slaughtering sheep, his life changed. Sated and drowsy, Alfred was easily captured by superstitious

townsfolk. They were about to burn him alive when a band of Vistani came upon the scene and bought Alfred. Their leader agreed to set him free if he vowed to grant safe passage to any Vistani he might encounter during his lifetime. He agreed. But the Vistani leader had foreseen his future and knew it well, so when Timothy decided to tempt fate and attacked her, he found himself engulfed in Vistani-summoned Mists. The dark powers were amused by his attempt at treachery, so he became the lord of Verbrek.

**Current Sketch:** Alfred despises his own human form and believes his bestial nature is divine. The high priest of a wolf god, Alfred was inspired by the tales of the villagers in Arkandale, and he came to believe that he could actually talk to the wolf god. When Verbrek opened up, his dreams became reality.

Alfred hates all intelligent creatures except werewolves and dire wolves; all others are blasphemous heathens according to the creed of his wolf god. He tolerates the Vistani because of his debt to them and because he knows he can't fool them. Truth be told, he also tolerates them out of fear.

After the Grand Conjunction, Alfred was overjoyed to learn that his lands had increased. Even better, he had taken control of his father's domain, Arkandale. However, it was not his own evil that commanded the new territory, but his father's inability to hold power. Arkandale became a part of Verbrek by default, passing from the father to the son.

**Combat:** Alfred conforms to all the normal werewolf abilities with the following exceptions. He is 25% resistant to all magic and he is a 6th-level priest of the wolf god. His spheres are All, Animal, Charm, Divination, Plant, and Summoning. Also, when the moon has risen Alfred can use any dark shadow as a *dimension door* to any other moonshadow within range. This is an ability granted by Ravenloft and does not affect the number of spells he can cast each day.

## Timothy, Nathan

**Ex-lord of Arkandale**
**Werewolf, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 (5) | Str | 15 (18/25) |
| Movement | 12 (15) | Dex | 13 (17) |
| Level/Hit Dice | 5+4 | Con | 13 (19) |
| Hit Points | 40 | Int | 16 |
| THAC0 | 15 | Wis | 12 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 12 |
| Damage/Attack | 2d4 or by weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Surprise | | |
| Special Defenses | +1 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Nathan has curly, black hair a full beard, and a sinister, predatory grin. He is middle aged and has an average height and build. As a werewolf he can assume the form of a man, man-wolf, or dire wolf. The numbers in parentheses above reflect his man wolf form.

Nathan rarely dresses in finery, preferring the simple garb of a sailor or river boat captain. His hands are calloused and his face is brown from working many hours in the sun. He always carries a dagger, used as a tool more often than as a weapon.

**Background:** Nathan Timothy is the son of Eowin Timothy, a powerful werewolf still living in Mordent. As a young man Nathan had an irresistible urge to wander, to keep moving, as if he believed that by traveling from land to land he could somehow escape the demiplane. He left a trail of carcasses in his wake. Several years later, with no place left to ravage and explore, he entered the Mists. Arkandale was formed and he became its lord.

But Nathan had no aspirations to power, so he merely continued to run his boat up and down the Musarde River. When the Grand Conjunction occurred, his boat was near the Verbrek border. Thick mists blocked out all visibility, and without knowing it Nathan sailed into his son's domain. The, when the

Conjunction collapsed, he apparently failed to catch the dark powers' notice. Verbrek expanded and swallowed Arkandale, and Nathan discovered that he could now sail his boat any where the river was navigable.

**Current Sketch:** Nathan is shrewd, devious, and heartless. Finally able to satisfy his wanderlust, he sails the Musarde and Arden Rivers. (However, he is still virtually tethered to the water itself; see "Combat," below.)

**Combat:** Nathan has the normal combat abilities of a werewolf (see the *Monstrous Manual*), with the following exceptions. Only magical weapons can harm him, regardless of the form he takes. Silver has no effect. When wounded he regenerates 3 hit points per round. He cannot regenerate acid or poison damage, although he gains a +1 bonus to his saving throw vs. poison because his Constitution is high. Like a troll, he can regenerate hit points even if he loses them all, which makes him very difficult to kill.

Ravenloft continues to grant Nathan great power, but it also curses him: He must spend most of his life over water. In the forests, carnivores experience the thrill of the hunt; Nathan hears their excited howls and feels a pulling at his gut, but he cannot leave his watery prison. Every hour that he is not on the water, he loses 1 hit point. When his total hit points drop to 0, he does not die, but must lie in agony until someone carries him to the Musarde or Arden River or one of their tributaries. (He once lay helpless for a month before a servant discovered his plight.)

## Tristessa

**Lord of Keening**
**Banshee, Chaotic Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 0 | Str | — |
| Movement | 15 | Dex | 13 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 8 | Con | — |
| Hit Points | 64 | Int | 15 |
| THAC0 | 13 | Wis | 13 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 9 |
| Damage/Attack | 2d10+8 (touch) | | |
| Special Attacks | Death wail three times per day (paralyzing in daylight); spell-like powers | | |
| Special Defenses | +1 weapon to hit; detects presence of living creatures in her domain | | |
| Magic Resistance | 50% | | |

As with all banshees, Keening's lord is a floating, luminous spirit—the shadow of her former self. Unlike most other groaning spirits, however, Tristessa was a drow elf, so her skin is black as coal and it glitters when she moves, as if it were material cut from the starry heavens. Her long white hair floats wildly about her, making her more visible in the dark.

Tristessa's face is distorted by torment and grief. Her eyes are large and round, with flickering blue irises. When she wails her mouth gapes wide, revealing white teeth and a purple tongue. Tears well in her eyes and stream down her cheeks like wax from a candle. She is tall, thin, and graceful, and she wears a tattered gown of violet gauze and carried a blood-spattered shroud over her arm.

**Background:** Tristessa is believed to have come from Arak, a drow-dominated domain that lay just south of eastern Darkon before the Grand Conjunction. (Arak has since been annexed by Azalin, and the drow have disappeared from their caverns beneath Mounts Nirka and Nyid—what lives there now, no one knows or cares to know.) Tristessa was said to have been a priestess of Lolth.

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The story goes that the drow defied the spider goddess and was punished by giving birth to a baby that had the legs of a spider. As deformity is not tolerated by drow society, Tristessa and the baby were dragged to the surface of Arak and staked to the ground. When the sun rose it killed them both. Tristessa suffered not only the agony of sunlight, but she had to watch her helpless child die in slow torment all the while. Her screams were so shrill that the drow deep underground could hear them. Ultimately Tristessa dissolved under the sun, but her spirit arose in wrath and destroyed all life on the surface of Arak. A storm moved in and the Mists created Keening, a new land in the Demiplane of Dread.

**Current Sketch:** Tristessa lives in a cavern near the summit of Mount Lament, in the center of her domain. The cavern is a shaft that plummets deep into the mountain, with yet more tunnels that wind around it. Glistening cobwebs hang across the tunnels, embedded with blue, glittering stones.

When the sun sets she leaves her lair and searches for her child. To the startled traveler encountered in the night, she whispers, "Tell me, where is my child?" and when no answer comes to her, she begins to wail.

**Combat:** Anyone who looks upon Tristessa may be called upon to make a fear check with a –2 penalty. When she keens by night, all living creatures within 30 feet must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or die of terror on the spot. If she wails during the day and the saving throw is failed, then the victim is merely paralyzed (this affliction must be magically or psionically removed).

At will the banshee inflicts a crippling deformity with her touch: Any body part that meets her fingers warps until it is useless. Such attacks inflict 1d8 points of damage and completely immobilize the victim for one full round while the deformity takes shape. This is cause for a horror check with a –4 penalty. The deformity heals itself when the character leaves Keening, but there is a 50% that it will come back if the character returns to the domain.

Tristessa can become invisible at will, but doing so slows her movement by half. By day she can appear corporeal, but normal objects will continue to pass through her without harm. She can carry objects, however, by using a natural ability to levitate them.

Like other undead, Tristessa is immune to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, *slow*, and the like. She also enjoys numerous powers that are accorded to the drow elves and their priestesses of Lolth. Those who are interested in a complete rundown of all her powers and weaknesses, as well as a description of the City of the Dead in her domain, should consult *Darklords* (9331).

## van Richten, Dr. Rudolph

**Sage and Monster Hunter (10th-level Thief), Lawful Good**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 10 | Str | 11 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 16 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 10 | Con | 10 |
| Hit Points | 76 | Int | 17 |
| THAC0 | 16 | Wis | 16 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 10 |
| Damage/Attack | By weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Nil | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | Nil | | |

Dr. van Richten is certainly not a darklord, yet he is as notorious as any of them, and his inclusion among the *Who's Doomed* of Ravenloft is essential. The doctor is a middle-aged man, small and thin. His short, graying blonde hair is sparse on top, but he has allowed the hair on the back of his head to grow long. He has a lopsided grin and a sparkle to match in his eyes.

**Background:** Originally a native of Rivalis, Darkon, van Richten was a doctor who healed without magic. He had little skill as a surgeon, relying more on herbal medicines.

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One day, the Vistani kidnapped his son Erasmus and took the boy out of Darkon. Van Richten pursued and caught them, then exacted bloody revenge when he learned they had sold his son to a vampire. Unwilling to surrender hope, van Richten eventually found Erasmus—or what remained of him. Newly undead, the boy begged van Richten to destroy him, so his father released him from torment, though it tortured him to do so.

That was the first time he had ever killed an undead creature, but it was far from the last.

**Current Sketch:** Since his son's destruction, van Richten has hunted vampires and other supernatural creatures throughout Ravenloft, although he has never yet attempted to destroy the lord of any domain. When not actively in pursuit of a creature, he runs an herbalist shop in Mordentshire and writes about his experiences, hoping to inspire heroes to cleanse the land of the Mists of its evil.

Dr. van Richten is wise and well educated, and he knows a great deal about supernatural lore. *Realm of Terror* provides a sampling of his knowledge (see Chapter X), but those heroes who would be a bane to evil should consult the *Van Richten's Guides* themselves.

**Combat:** The doctor always carries a holy symbol, a vial of holy water, a small mirror, a silver dagger, and a wooden stake. When hunting prey, he carries other appropriate items, too. He rarely faces an opponent in direct combat, preferring to outwit the evil creatures and use their inherent weaknesses against them. Through experience and necessity, van Richten has mastered some thievish tricks. His skills are defined below.

| | |
|---|---|
| Pick Pockets | 15% |
| Open Locks | 40% |
| Find/Remove Traps | 85% |
| Move Silently | 40% |
| Hide in Shadows | 45% |
| Detect Noise | 65% |
| Climb Walls | 70% |
| Read Languages | 80% |

## van Riese, Captain Pieter

**Lord of the Sea of Sorrows**
**Ghost, Neutral Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | –5/0 | Str | 18 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 15 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 14 | Con | 17 |
| Hit Points | 62 | Int | 14 |
| THAC0 | 7 | Wis | 9 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 16 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d12 and drain 3 levels | | |
| Special Attacks | Ghostly abilities | | |
| Special Defenses | +4/+2 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | 50% | | |

Pieter van Riese is a powerful apparition who sails the Sea of Sorrows in his spectral ship, the *Relentless*. He and his ship appear much as they did in life, but they are now translucent wraiths. Captain van Riese is a tall, broad-shouldered man with a strong jaw, a close-cropped beard of iron gray, and deep-set eyes that smolder like coals. He wears a dark, high-collared bridge coat and a battered sealskin cap.

*Relentless* is a seaworthy, square-rigged brigantine that always appears under full sail, regardless of the actual wind conditions. She carries no crew save her captain, who paces the quarterdeck like a caged animal. Van Riese is capable of willing the *Relentless* into a corporeal state; when she is solid, she cannot be distinguished from an ordinary vessel.

**Background:** Pieter van Riese sailed the seas of his home world his entire life. He stowed away on his first voyage and worked his way up from cabin boy to able-bodied seaman to boatswain's mate. After many years before the mast, van Riese saved enough money to become master of his own ship.

Van Riese had a dream of finding a northern passage from the seas of his home to the exotic, treasure-laden isles of the east, so he searched the arctic waters endlessly, supporting his expeditions with whaling and

sealing. Time and time again he was defeated by the icy seas and treacherous fogs.

Van Riese's dream became an undying obsession. The wealth and fame he would gain in finding a passage meant nothing to him; it became a personal battle against the northern seas. Van Riese drove his crews mercilessly, believing that their weaknesses prevented him from reaching his goal.

In his final voyage van Riese struggled for more than two months to round the ice-bound northern islands. *Relentless* was battered savagely by howling gales and mountainous seas. The crew begged their captain to turn back, but van Riese could not be swayed. He executed the crew's spokesmen and continued his war against the sea.

At the height of the gale, the *Relentless* herself was finally defeated. Her foremast was lost and she began taking on water. Captain van Riese's rage was awful. In the moment of his defeat, he swore an unspeakable oath, bartering his life and those of his crew for the power to force the passage. And his terrible oath was heard.

The gale abated, the ship righted herself, and Captain van Riese found himself sailing in the fog-shrouded waters he *thought* he had sought for so long. But his crew was gone, and his beloved *Relentless* had become a spectral apparition cruising the seas of Ravenloft.

**Current Sketch:** Van Riese wanders the Sea of Sorrows, still driven to find the passage he was denied in life. The Mists confound him at every turn. He crosses and re-crosses the Sea, seeking some escape from his curse. The mere sight of the *Relentless* is considered a dire omen for other seafarers on the Sea of Sorrows.

Captain van Riese now believes that it was his crew who failed him, and that a new crew will enable him to finally escape. He searches for courageous and skillful mariners, luring them aboard the *Relentless* with promises of far ports and great riches. Those who listen to him vanish when the *Relentless* resumes her ghostly state, and those who refuse van Riese's offer provoke his inhuman wrath.

**Combat:** Captain Pieter van Riese is a ghost of the fifth magnitude (see *Van Richten's Guide to Ghosts* [9355]). He has a number of unusual powers. His touch does not age his victims, but instead drains life energy (experience levels) from them and causes 1d12 points of chilling damage. Each level drained makes the *Relentless* a little more tangible. Van Riese is also able to *dominate* any living person who meets his gaze.

The sight of the *Relentless* forces living characters to make a successful saving throw vs. spell or be paralyzed with fear for as long as she remains in sight. van Riese can also create *fog clouds*, *shadow monsters*, *solid fog*, or *walls of fog* at will within 500 yards of the *Relentless*. In addition, he can summon 2d4 bowlyns to aid him—the unfortunate souls who have joined his crew in Ravenloft.

Van Riese's weakness is his bond with the *Relentless*. Should the vessel be destroyed, van Riese would be destroyed as well. Of course, it's not easy to sink a ghost ship. . . .

## von Kharkov, Baron Urik

**Lord of Valachan**
**Nosferatu Vampire, Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 1 | Str | 18/00 |
| Movement | 12 | Dex | 18 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 10+2 | Con | 19 |
| Hit Points | 50 | Int | 17 |
| THAC0 | 11 (8) | Wis | 10 |
| No. of Attacks | 2 or 1 | Cha | 17 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d3/1d3 or by weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | See below | | |
| Special Defenses | +2 weapon to hit | | |
| Magic Resistance | 10% | | |

Baron Urik von Kharkov is a black-skinned man standing just over 6 feet tall. He is broad shouldered and quite muscular. His eyes are an unusual shade of yellow, and when he grows

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angry they change from round pupils to the slitted ones of a cat. His hair is straight and black, and it is usually kept meticulously groomed.

**Background:** Von Kharkov began life as a panther, but he was polymorphed into a full-grown adult by a red wizard of Thay. He was promptly named and titled by the wizard, then schooled and trained for combat. Because of his feline heritage, he displayed a strong tendency toward violence and treachery.

Eventually the red wizard brought von Kharkov together with a female enemy and allowed them to become lovers. Then he dispelled his polymorphing magic and the panther tore the woman to shreds. Having forgotten his true roots, von Kharkov was horrified by the transformation. He suspected that the wizard meant to use him for subsequent assassinations, so the man-panther fled Thay and stumbled into a bank of Mists, which transported him to Darkon. There, he learned of Azalin's secret undead police, the Kargat, and he sought out a vampire to induct him into the ranks. Twenty years later his master was killed, so he fled into the Mists once more. This time the dark powers embraced him and created the domain of Valachan.

Von Kharkov quickly adjusted to his new prison. He learned that it was stocked with black leopards to do his bidding, and that he could control domestic cats in the domain as well. Also, his hands grew fur and retractable claws (which he hides with gloves).

Years later he found a small statuette of a cat in the lower reaches of his keep, and it proved to be the *cat of Felkovic* (see page 125 of *Realm of Terror*). The magical item eventually hunted him, but he was confident in his lordly might and didn't fear it, so the *cat* mauled him badly. To this day, the item is the only thing he really fears.

**Current Sketch:** Von Kharkov has been a panther, a man, and a vampire, so he retains some abilities of all three: He has the quick and ferocious temper of a great cat, the intelligence and creativity of a human, and the fell powers of a nosferatu vampire (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 3 [2153], available in November of 1994, or consult the original RAVENLOFT *Realm of Terror* boxed set). He hates wizards and other vampires above all things.

**Combat:** Like all nosferatu vampires, von Kharkov drains blood rather than life force (experience levels). For game purposes, this is a loss of Constitution points. The Baron can draw 1 to 3 points per round, and he heals 1 point of damage to himself for every point of Constitution he drains. If a victim's score reaches 2, then he or she is at Death's door and only an immediate blood transfusion will save his or her life. Otherwise, the victim's score continues to drop by 1 per day, whether or not von Kharkov attacks, and when the Constitution score drops to 0, the victim dies. If the victim is not reduced to a score of 2 or less, then he or she gains 1 point per day until the original score is regained.

Those who have been bitten by the Baron can be telepathically contacted by him anywhere in Valachan, and they are subject to the effects of a *charm* spell unless they make a successful saving throw vs. spell (no modifier). Of course, those who die of the Baron's attacks rise as his minions.

The Baron can charm mortals (as the spell) by making a gaze attack (see the *DMG*), but the intended victim is allowed a saving throw with a –3 penalty. A second form of his gaze attack works like a *forget* spell, causing the victim to lose all memory of the previous three rounds. He can use both of these gaze attacks while draining his victim, so his assaults are rarely remembered.

The Baron can extend his claws through his gloves and use them to attack for 1d3 points of damage per hit. He also can take the form of a panther at will (but not a wolf or bat), gaining all abilities of a natural creature of that form (see "Cats, Great" in the *Monstrous Manual*). His statistics in panther form are presented below.

**Von Kharkov's panther form:** THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; AC 6; MV 18; SA rake with rear claws (1d6/1d6) when fore claws both hit; SD surprised only on a 1; SZ M.

For more information regarding Baron von Kharkov, see *Darklords* (9331).

## von Zarovich, Count Strahd

**Lord of Barovia**
**16th-level Necromancer, Vampire, Lawful Evil**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Armor Class | 1 | Str | 18/76 |
| Movement | 12, Fl 18(C) | Dex | 16 |
| Level/Hit Dice | 16/11+1 | Con | 17 |
| Hit Points | 55 | Int | 18 |
| THAC0 | 11 | Wis | 17 |
| No. of Attacks | 1 | Cha | 16 |
| Damage/Attack | 1d6+4 or by weapon | | |
| Special Attacks | Charm gaze, energy drain, spells | | |
| Special Defenses | See below | | |
| Magic Resistance | 15% | | |

Strahd is a tall man at 6'1". His body is lean and hardened from long years as a warrior. His face is gaunt, with strong features and prominent cheekbones. His eyes are dark and hypnotic, like deep pools with subtle reflections of red light. When he is aroused or enraged, his eyes burn like red-hot coals. His skin is usually pale, but it becomes flushed with each feeding and retains its healthy color for several hours.

When he became lord of Ravenloft, Strahd's ears developed points, like the ears of an elf. The deformity is subtle, however, and he can readily disguise it by combing his hair over the tips. Sometimes he claims to be a half-elf to explain them, although this is false.

His fingers are elongated and thin, with long, sharp nails. If he wishes to conceal the nails, he wears soft gray lambskin gloves. Like most vampires, his fangs are not obvious unless he wants them to be noticed—he can speak and even yawn without attracting undue attention. When he is aroused or attacking, the fangs lengthen until they protrude over his lower lip.

Strahd tends to wear black with touches of white and red. His clothing style is the tailored, layered look common to Barovian nobles. He wears a single piece of jewelry, a large red stone on a heavy gold chain around his neck.

**Background:** Strahd calls himself the "first vampyr," but the claim seems unlikely, given the diversity and spread of these creatures. He is certainly the first vampire in Ravenloft. His story begins long ago. The complete details are set down in the *Tome of Strahd*, which appears in Chapter I of *Realm of Terror*. The story is summarized below.

*When he was still a living man, Strahd was a warrior noble who was good and just. His armies thundered across the land, uniting many countries. But the years of death and war slowly changed him. He found himself bitter, past his youth, and brooding about death. He settled in the land of Barovia, to rule in a world now forgotten. He and his family made their home in a castle on a precipice—a castle called Ravenloft. Strahd ruled Barovia with a harsh hand, grinding the population into the dust. But he was not yet the evil that drew him into the demiplane Ravenloft.*

*Strahd's younger brother Sergei was betrothed to Tatyana, a girl from the valley. Strahd loved her himself and could not bear to let another man, even his brother, have her. So powerful was this emotion that he made a pact with a dark power—Strahd says with Death itself. He sealed the pact by murdering his own brother just hours before the wedding, and in so doing Strahd became undead. By the Barovian calendar it was spring of the year 351.*

*Tatyana spurned him, and he pursued her until she fell from the battlements. The castle guards, recognizing his evil state, attempted to kill Strahd, but they could not. He had become a vampire. He then murdered most of the wedding guests and many of the castle staff.*

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It is not known exactly how or why Barovia entered the Demiplane of Dread—whether it was Strahd's pact, the murderous rampage, or a curse in the land of Barovia itself. Perhaps it was all three. But Barovia did enter the demiplane and become its first domain. Like Strahd's castle, the demiplane became known as Ravenloft.

In time the land changed to reflect Strahd and his curse. Barovia expanded, encompassing several valleys in the Balinok Mountains. A ring of choking fog encircled the town of Barovia and Castle Ravenloft. Strahd's control over the creatures in Barovia grew strong. He was truly the lord of his domain.

Prior to his fall from grace, Strahd had been a mage of mediocre skill. Now he dedicated himself to Death, becoming a powerful necromancer. (He had little else to do with his time, being trapped in the land of the Mists.) He explored the ways of death, learning about his vampiric nature and powers. In 470 a band of Vistani, led by Madame Eva, entered Barovia. She and her kind had a natural resistance to the powers of the land, and Strahd was in awe. Eva and Strahd struck a deal. Strahd would keep them from harm (his own) if they would agree to search for a portal that would release him from the demiplane. Strahd gave Madame Eva the formula that counteracts the effects of his deadly fog (see "Barovia," in Chapter I).

In 542 Azalin the lich entered Ravenloft. (See "Azalin," above, for details.) Reluctantly he agreed to serve the vampire lord. Strahd required two things of the lich: that he teach the vampire great magic and that he use his powers to find an escape from Ravenloft. After years of experimenting, Azalin managed to transport himself and Strahd into Mordent. They believed they had escaped to the Prime Material Plane, but Mordent had become part of their familiar prison instead. The year was 579. Neither Strahd nor Azalin can remember what happened to them in Mordent; it is like a misty dream to them now. According to legend, they became entwined with the experiments of an alchemist who had invented a magical machine that could divide and transfer souls.

Eventually Azalin became the lord of Darkon. The lich's abiding hatred for Strahd is unending, and he very nearly achieved the destruction of the vampire, as well as causing the Grand Conjunction, which would release all the evil in the Demiplane of Dread (see Chapter I of *Realm of Terror*). Aside from that near catastrophe, the years have passed and Barovia still stands. The original Barovian calendar still marks the passage of time in many domains of the demiplane. Not much has changed, including Strahd himself. Only the Vistani can enter and leave Barovia safely; their pact with Strahd still stands. Unfortunately for Strahd, he can never leave.

**Current Sketch:** Strahd is a ruthless, cold, calculating genius. Everything he does is toward some ultimate goal. Strahd never takes anything at face value. He always has a contingency plan (or two) for any situation. As an undead creature, time means nothing to him. He is more patient than any mortal. When role-playing Strahd, never let him give away hints or clues. He always plays his cards close to his chest. His plans should include anything the players may think up.

He has only two weaknesses: He has been powerful for so long that he underestimates the abilities of normal humans. He is egotistical, but does not let foolish pride endanger him. It does not bother him in the least to retreat before an opponent. His second weakness is his greatest: his eternal "love" for Tatyana. Her body was never found after she plunged from the tower battlements of Castle Ravenloft, and through the years there has repeatedly appeared one woman in Barovia who so closely resembles Tatyana that she could only be her reincarnation. Finding that woman, obtaining her, and winning her love is Strahd's obsession. Strahd would do almost anything to regain Tatyana. He will not act blindly or foolishly for her, but he is willing to take

calculated risks. She is the only thing that can bring emotion to his soul.

Strahd maintains relationships with the Vistani and a few of the other lords in Ravenloft, but he treats them like pieces on a chess board, to be manipulated toward a goal. The Vistani are his primary source of information from other lands, but they also conduct trading and make purchases for him. He cares nothing for his descendants, servants, or minions.

The demiplane has given Strahd many powers. For example, he has a horse-drawn carriage that travels the roads of Barovia, unmanned, at his whim. Strahd can sense the presence of thinking creatures near the carriage and knows whether or not they are inside it. He cannot read their minds or tell anything about them, however. His additional powers are detailed below.

**Combat:** Strahd is formidable. He has all of the common vampire abilities such as draining levels by touch, charm by gaze, etc. (see the *Monstrous Manual*). As a 389-year–old vampire, however, he is considerably stronger than his common cousins. He is immune to garlic and mirrors. (He still doesn't cast a reflection, but the mere presence of a mirror doesn't bother him.) Any victim of his charming gaze must save vs. charm with a –3 penalty. He can withstand up to 10 rounds of sunlight without suffering damage, although an 11th round would destroy him.

Weapons must have a +2 or greater magical bonus to harm Strahd. When he wields a weapon himself, he is not restricted to his character class of wizard. As a vampire, he can wield any weapon. With his exceptional Strength, he gains a +3 bonus to attack rolls and a +6 bonus to damage.

Strahd has many types of minions which he can mentally summon at any time. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds. He can summon 1d10 × 10 bats or rats, or 3d6 worg wolves. The bats cannot attack, but they do confuse, obscure vision, and foil spellcasting. He also can summon 1d10 Strahd zombies or 2d10 Strahd skeletons (see the RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM, vol. 3 [2153], available in November of 1994, or consult the original RAVENLOFT *Realm of Terror* boxed set). Through his necromantic magic Strahd has created other powerful minions. Undead created by Strahd tend to be very difficult to turn—more than their Hit Dice would normally indicate, which is a gift from the dark powers.

As a master vampire Strahd has created other vampires, most of them female. It is his habit to destroy these lesser vampires after a year or so. He cannot allow too many vampires to prey on the populace or plot to overthrow him. Strahd rarely creates male vampires.

Unlike other creatures of his type, Strahd does not need permission to enter any home or building in Barovia. In a sense, Strahd *is* the land; his bond is so tight that he needs no invitations to explore his domain.

As lord, he can control many inanimate objects in Barovia. For example, it is known that he can open or close the two main gates on the Old Svalich Road merely by thinking about it. He can be anywhere in Barovia at the time. He has a similar power over the main entrances to Castle Ravenloft. He can sense the passage of any thinking creature through these gates. Once the creature has passed through the gate, however, he loses track of them (anyone entering from the Mists does so without his knowledge).

The full extent of Strahd's power over objects is not known. It may be that these powers change to suit the whim of the dark powers. On the other hand, Strahd may have such control over all his direct possessions.

During daylight, Strahd falls into a coma and appears dead to all normal or magical tests. He can sleep anywhere within Barovia and recover lost hit points. He prefers coffins, but any resting place free of sunlight will do.

Today, Strahd is an accomplished 16th-level necromancer. (In life, he was merely a 5th-level mage.) The demiplane converted his skills to necromancy, and his skills have steadily grown.

**Spell List**

1st level (5/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Affect normal fires, burning hands, comprehend languages, dancing lights, hold portal, magic missile, protection from good, read magic, shocking grasp, unseen servant*

2nd level (5/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Alter self, darkness 15-foot radius, ESP, fog cloud, invisibility, knock, locate objects, spectral hand, stinking cloud, vocalize*

3rd level (5/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Dispel magic, explosive runes, feign death, fireball, gust of wind, hold person, lightning bolt, nondetection, tongues, vampiric touch*

4th level (5/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Contagion, detect scrying, dimension door, enervation, ice storm, polymorph other, polymorph self, solid fog, wall of ice, wizard eye*

5th level (5/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Animate dead, avoidance, magic jar, pass wall, sending, stone shape, summon shadow, telekinesis, teleport, wall of stone*

6th level (3/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Antimagic shell, contingency, control weather, death spell, guards and wards, invisible stalker, stone to flesh*

7th level (2/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Delayed blast fireball, finger of death, forcecage, limited wish, spell turning*

8th level (1/day, plus 1 necromantic): *Clone, maze, symbol*

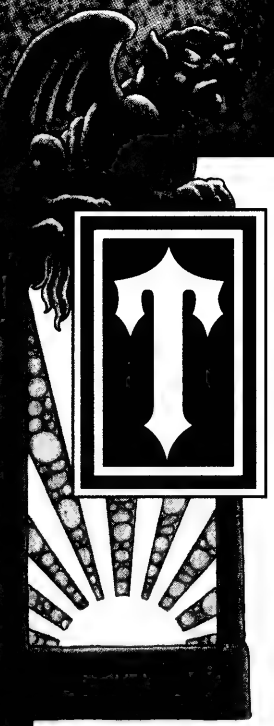
Strahd keeps a *contingency* spell active at all times. It states that when he is exposed to paralyzing or destructive light, he is instantly teleported to a secret coffin hidden in a cave in the mountains. There he can heal until he is ready to seek vengeance.

Magical items are rare in Ravenloft, but Strahd has a small collection. His most prized item is a *crystal ball.* With it he monitors the goings-on in his domain, as well as many events beyond his borders. The bloodstone pendant Strahd wears is an *amulet of proof against detection and location.* He also wears a *cloak of protection +2.* On his left hand is a *ring of fire resistance.* Stored away in his armory he has a *sword +1, +2 vs. magic-using and enchanted creatures.*

The classic adventure module I6, *Ravenloft,* which inspired the creation of this entire campaign setting, has been redesigned for AD&D 2nd Edition rules and is called *House of Strahd* (9418). Those who would brave Castle Ravenloft and play Cat and Mouse with the first lord of the land of the Mists should play that adventure. Also, the adventure modules *From the Shadows* (9375) and *Roots of Evil* (9413) enact the events that led to the Grand Conjunction and then made it collapse.

Strahd is the subject of the novel *Vampire of the Mists* (8056); he appears in the novel *Knight of the Black Rose* (8057); and he tells his own story in the novel *I, Strahd* (8062).

# IV: THE VISTANI



The Vistani are a mysterious people who wander the lands and travel the Mists, independent of the bonds that shackle lords to their domains and the folk to their dreary, oppressed existence. One might say they are the most powerful characters in Ravenloft, because in spirit they are free.

The Vistani have dark skin, dress in vibrant clothing, and rarely linger in any location. Their hair is black and shining, though some are born with amber tresses. Their eyes are black and luminous, and in a few tribes are of a shape that suggests a distant link to the Orient. But it is more than physical appearance that defines a Vistana.

These nomadic people have an ageless, timeless quality. Their elders seem to live for centuries, as if they have distanced themselves from time, just enough to slow its disintegration of their bodies and stop its erosion of their minds. Perhaps they have even become independent of time, but it is more likely that they have a unique understanding of it, which others cannot grasp. To the Vistani time is not a random sequence of cause and effect, or a linear track that they are forced to follow; it is an intricate web in which threads of the future are closely entwined with those of the past. To Vistani seers an event with seemingly no relationship to another can be a window to another place and time—a portal that opens for them alone.

Only Vistani can tell the future in Ravenloft. In their hands, a tiny crystal becomes an object from which they can divine an inner vision of things to come. Cards, when touched by any person and turned by a Vistana, can tell events that lie in that person's past as well as the future. Some Vistani read palms. Others cast bones or gaze at tea leaves in the bottom of a cup. In some the gift of seeing is so strong that they need only close their eyes and a vision appears. Every Vistana has the potential to see the future, but not all have an equal ability to use their gift.

Many dark-eyed wanderers have the powers to cure and to curse. Some of their talents involve rituals or potions, but some Vistani need no props to harm or heal. They need only their own gaze, and the powers of the *evil eye*.

The *evil eye* is the ability to cast an enchantment with a look. The capability is most common among women and seems to increase with age. Old Vistani women whose hair has gone white and whose teeth have fallen out may command the greatest respect, for their curses, when the will is strong, are said to rival those of the dark powers. Usually, however, a Vistani curse is "embarrassing" or "dangerous" rather than "deadly" (see Chapter V of *Realm of Terror* for more information about degrees of curses).

Only a fool crosses a Vistana, because every crime against their kind, no matter how secret, may return to haunt the offender. Even offenses against the dead can be dangerous. It is said that he who robs the body of a Vistana may find that his fingers have turned black the following morn, and the blackness cannot be washed away. (Every living Vistana knows this sign and will recognize the bearer as an enemy of Vistani tribes.) With repeated wrongs the blackness may spread, until the offending flesh begins to fall away like that of a leper. So say the Vistani, at least.

Vistani are also gifted explorers. They can enter the Misty Border and determine where and when they shall leave it. According to legend they can even enter and leave the Demiplane of Dread itself, though some say it is only because they know of portals that no others have discovered. If a *giorgio*, or nonVistana, wins their confidence, the Vistani may allow him or her to travel with them. No Vistana can be forced to act as a guide, however, nor can any giorgio stow away on a caravan and hope to escape the demiplane.

The Vistani are apparently protected by the Mists: Like chaff is culled from wheat, the Mists of Ravenloft separate unwanted followers from the full-blooded Vistani, and send them different ways.

Vistani have little to fear from the rulers of Ravenloft's domains. Most lords tolerate them, and many are in awe of their powers, for the Vistani ability to travel the Mists and foretell the future commands great respect. Some lords even forge agreements with the tribes. Count Strahd von Zarovich, for example, formed an alliance with the Vistana Madame Eva many years ago. He gave her the potion of immunity to his choking fog. Today, nearly all Vistani know this formula. They charge travelers 10 gp apiece for a drink of the potion and then ferry them across Barovia. In return for the Count's cooperation, Vistani inform Strahd of the activities in other domains, and they act as spies for him in his own.

## Lifestyle

Vistani are vagabonds wandering from domain to domain, rarely pausing more than a week in any one place. Progress on the road is languid and unhurried. Children scamper beside the wagons, gleefully engulfed in their own clouds of dust. Each tribe is an extended family of 10 to 50 members. A man is the head of his own family, next replaced by his eldest son. However, a grandmother with powers of the *evil eye* commands the greatest respect of all. Vistani cherish their children, perhaps because many die so tragically. The Vistani are blessed with many powers of healing, but they cannot prevent a stillbirth.

A Vistani home is called a *vardo*. These small, well-crafted wagons have tall wooden walls, an arched wooden roof, and a door at the back. The vardo is drawn by horses and the driver sits up front on an outdoor seat. Most vardos are painted in vivid colors such as turquoise and black with gold and magenta highlights. The finest are carefully decorated with gilded carvings picturing proud steeds, intricate flowers, or prancing deer. Sometimes even the wheels are painted gold. The vardo of a great Vistani lady may include tiny windows made of etched or tinted glass.

The vagabonds usually travel with a menagerie. Horses and a faithful mongrel or two trot alongside. Chicken crates are strapped beneath the wagons, and a tethered ox or goat may bring up the rear. Sometimes a trained bear follows the caravan, ready to amaze and entertain villagers at the tribe's next stop.

Vistani pursue a number of occupations. Of course, their traveling ways make them natural escorts and traders. They also tell fortunes to those who are brave enough to hear them. (The future is often dark in Ravenloft.) Some foretell the weather to interested farmers. A few are thieves and con artists. Still others are tinkers, knife grinders, or pot menders, selling their services from village to city. Many are entertainers who earn money through music and dance. They may even keep a particularly well-trained bear, which may not only dance, but also may ease weary muscles by walking on a paying customer's back. Some tribes are also cagey horse-traders. Vistani have an unusual rapport with these animals. Only Vistani can break the wild colts of Nova Vaasa with any success, and their own horses carry the Nova Vaasan bloodlines. Their attachment to these beasts is so strong that when mother's milk is unavailable, a Vistani babe may be fed mare's milk.

Vistani make their camps well away from villages, usually near a clear-running brook or spring-fed pool. When the days are warm the children run naked, splashing in the water or relishing the lush, cool grass beneath their feet. Camps usually are well hidden. To find them, clever travelers look for the *vista-chiri*, the tiny gray and white birds that are rumored to follow Vistani from land to land.

Each night, and again early in the morning, Vistani gather around a fire to dine and

commune. For supper each family passes one great pot, into which each person dips his or her own utensil. Vistani drink copious amounts of tea, and they make a coffee that is bitter and thick, like mud. In times of celebration, adults tip a glass of *aniso,* a drink that is flavored with aniseed.

Fire-building is a matter of honor among the men. They have an uncanny ability to encourage wood to burn, even when the forest has been drenched with rain. Sometimes, when a tribe wishes to conceal an item of value or danger, a fire builder may bury it deep beneath the fire site. Vistani children often sleep outside, and on bitter nights their father builds a fire in a trench. When the timber is reduced to coals he covers the embers with earth. The children sleep on top, beneath feather blankets and a tarp, preferably with an old dog for added warmth and company.

A boundless world is the Vistani's home, but their hearts are open only to their own people. They will reject their own kin if they are not of full blood, and marriage to a half-breed is forbidden. Vistani do not readily form friendships with giorgios, and they rarely invite them into their midst. When escorting travelers they prefer to leave them in a town or village when establishing a camp, or they may drop them at a peasant's home for the night. Only when a giorgio has earned respect, or has paid dearly for his safety in the camp, will he or she be allowed to join the Vistani's circle after twilight. Those who have been honored by such an invitation describe magical moments when the Vistani have gathered round a glowing fire to play their instruments and dance for their own enjoyment.

As the fire rages, young women dance to the fervent sounds of fiddles, guitars, and tambourines. Their skirts sweep the earth, rising and falling as they twirl, and if one looks closely, one can see the music swirling around them. Then, as the embers glow red and the sky turns from an inky blue to pitch black, the fiddler plays alone. He makes his instrument cry in a song of lament so clear, so acute, that it can pierce the listener's heart and make it bleed in sympathy. When it ends the leader of the tribe sings alone in the Vistani tongue. The lyrics tell his people that when the cock heralds the morn, they must move on.

## Fortunetelling

Fortunetellings can play an important role in Ravenloft adventures, adding atmosphere and mood, providing clues for player characters and even shaping the plot of the adventure itself. Given a Vistana's reputation for seeing the future in this demiplane, player characters are likely to ask to have their fortunes told. Of course, a Vistana can always refuse, but one whose palm is well greased is sure to foretell *something*, if only a lie. The pages that follow offer guidelines for handling fortunetelling.

Vistani use many methods to divine the future. "Scrying" is the most common technique: The fortuneteller, called the "seer," gazes upon an object such as a *crystal ball.* In time the object inspires a vision; the Vistana enters a private, inner world in which part of the future is revealed. No one else can see the vision. It may be hazy and open to interpretation or as clear as the crystal itself. For example, a seer who observes flames may interpret them as burning passion or rage, as well as a literal fire. The Vistana begins the scrying by concentrating on a person or place whose future is in question. There is no guarantee, however, that the vision will show an obvious link to this person or place, or even that a vision will occur.

A large *crystal ball* sitting on a table in a gypsy's tent is the traditional scrying device from literature. Many other objects can induce a Vistana's powers of divination—a small crystal that fits in the palm of a hand, the embers of a fire, a still pool, a mirror, or a vessel of black ink, for example.

Other common methods of fortunetelling are

cartomancy (reading with cards), bone casting, rune casting, reading tea leaves, palmistry, physiognomy, dream interpretation, astrology, and a host of others. Most require the seer to read or interpret a sign. Vistani usually say that a divine force guides their readings (and only theirs) and determines which sign appears. Thus, they are not the author of fortune or fate, only the interpreter.

No fortunetelling in Ravenloft is magical. (At least, no character can detect the use of magic.) Divining the future is a natural ability of the Vistani, who, by their own admission, are aided by greater, mysterious forces.

## When Vistani Tell Lies

Every Vistana in Ravenloft has the *potential* to tell the future accurately, but not every one can. They are natural con artists, and Ravenloft is full of fake seers who eagerly lighten the purses of gullible travelers. Some charlatans, especially those who travel alone or in small numbers, are not even Vistani.

There is no way to tell in advance whether a fortuneteller—especially a scryer—can truly divine the future. As a general rule, any Vistani tribe with more than 20 members has a true seer among them, usually an elderly woman. In smaller tribes the chance of encountering a true seer is 50%. If a seer has predicted the future correctly on other occasions, it is safe to say that she is a true seer.

But even true seers may speak falsely. Any Vistana may choose to lie, depending on her reaction to the enquirer. The seer may have a grudge against the person or feel that she can get more gold by not telling the truth. False seers tend to predict such things as "You will have an opportunity for riches, if you do not squander it" or "You will meet the woman of your dreams, but you may not recognize her." The client must pay more if he or she wants additional details. Absolute charlatans rarely predict anything horrid, as it's bad for business.

False seers should keep players on guard, but not overwhelm them. If the Vistani lie or make mistakes too often, they'll destroy the players' confidence in the predictions, as well as their interest. If that happens, player characters will cease to seek out seers and the Dungeon Master will lose a valuable tool for Ravenloft adventures.

## Predicting the Future in an RPG

Fortunetellings add a wondrous and mysterious element to books and stories, but they can challenging to bring off in a role-playing campaign. The reason is obvious: Player characters are unpredictable. The Dungeon Master cannot always guess what a player character will do in the next round, let alone in the days or weeks to come. Nor should he or she attempt to dictate the player characters' actions in order to ensure that the future turns out as predicted. The players will feel cheated, and the game won't be much fun.

That doesn't mean it's impossible to tell meaningful fortunes in a role-playing scenario. With the right approach the Dungeon Master can devise a fortune that predicts the future, lets adventurers act as they please, and still "comes true." There are three basic techniques for accomplishing this goal: *ambiguity*, *removal*, and *conditional predictions*.

✣ *Ambiguity* means the fortuneteller's prediction is vague. The prediction doesn't need to be impossibly cryptic, but it should suggest several outcomes or meanings. The Dungeon Master's job is to make sure the prediction fits most of the likely courses of action. Of course, that kind of convenience has a drawback: If a prediction is too vague it does little or nothing to help adventurers. Ambiguous predictions usually best serve to simply enhance the mood of the game, adding flavor to the adventure.

✣ *Removal* means that the prediction does not depend on the player characters' actions. A good Dungeon Master never dictates his or her players' choices, and a good prediction doesn't either. Instead, the prediction involves changes in the environment or events that are triggered by the actions of an nonplayer character.

✣ *Conditional predictions* usually include the word "if." *If* a character takes a certain action, then something significant will occur. The players still have a choice. They can perform the action stated or do something else. The condition also may be an event. In other words, if "x" occurs, "y" will follow. A conditional prediction never assumes that the result will always come true.

Most good predictions combine two or all of the techniques above. For example, a seer may say, "He who gazes upon the orb of gold shall have his shielding burnt away." This simply may mean, "You cannot hide in sunlight." Alternately, it may refer to a deadly trap that burns metal. The prediction is vague; it could fit either of these results. It does not dictate the player characters' actions, and may just as easily refer to a nonplayer character who gazes upon the orb. (Perhaps it's a tip that a vampire is involved in the plot.) The phrase suggests a condition, too: The shield will only burn away *if* someone gazes upon the orb. If the characters avoid the orb, they won't spoil the validity of the prediction.

## Choice of Venue

The best fortunetelling method depends on the goal of the Dungeon Master. Is it to add flavor to the game without revealing anything of value? Has he or she been caught off guard and need a quick fortune for a player character? Then scrying, with vague predictions about passion, conquest, or conflict may be in order. Scrying also provides a way to give player characters small clues about a villain. Large clues, however, usually should come to light as a result of the player characters' actions and the players' cleverness. If a fortune reveals an important secret, it's

best to do so with a puzzle or message that requires thought. Unfortunately, a scrying also can seem contrived, especially if it is too nebulous. And if nothing the player does will affect the fortune, he or she may decide the telling is unimportant. Scryings work best when prepared in advance.

Fortunetelling also can be used to determine the shape of an adventure. In the adventure module *House of Strahd* (9418), a fortunetelling dictates key aspects of the plot, including the villain's goal and the location of magical items. Early in the story a Vistana performs a special reading using an ordinary deck of playing cards. The players and the Dungeon Master act out the reading with real cards.

No matter which method of fortunetelling is chosen, it should fit the mood and flavor of the adventure. In a domain ruled by an Oriental vampire, for example, a card reading may not be appropriate. A better choice would be to cast sticks or coins.

## The Tarokka

One of the most common tools that the Vistani use in fortunetelling is the *tarokka*, or prophetic cards. Under the subtle influences of the Vistani, these cards can tell tales of the future and provide answers to many questions. In the domain of Mordent there is a saying: "No secret is safe from the tarokka," and this seems to be quite true.

An illustrated tarokka deck is included in this boxed set, and the Dungeon Master should examine each card as it is identified and described in the following pages.

**Editor's note:** Before proceeding any further, it is important to note that the tarokka deck is *nothing more* than a component in a game system. Any description of the cards and their use is purely for dramatic purposes.

**The lesser deck:** The tarokka comprises 54 cards, but 36 of them are divided into four suits of nine cards. These cards, known as the *lesser deck*, represent the inner strengths, weakness, and actions of persons. Each of the four suits (swords, coins, stars, and glyphs) symbolizes one type of individual. In AD&D game terms, each suit of the lesser deck represents one of the four basic character classes: warrior, rogue, wizard, and priest, respectively.

Each card has two aspects. The first (or *primary*) aspect deals with the goals and desires of those represented by the cards. The first two suits (swords and coins) are known as *mortal* cards, for their primary aspects are associated with those who value the tangible things of the world (wealth, for example). These cards have a natural affinity for characters of the warrior and rogue professions. The remaining two suits, stars and glyphs, are known as *mystery* cards and are identified with those who seek the intangible (knowledge, for example). The actions and fates of those who deal in knowledge and power, wizards and priests, are visible in these cards.

Further, each suit is tied to one of the four elements—Earth (swords), Air (coins), Fire (stars), and Water (glyphs). These elemental ties are known as *secondary* aspects and are generally considered less powerful than the primary aspects, but the secondary aspects can be very important in providing subtle information to the trained eye of the Vistani.

**The archetypes:** Four other cards, the *archetypes*, are each considered the master of one suit. Thus, the *Wizard* card is known as the *Master of Stars*, the *Warrior* card is also known as the *Master of Swords*, and so on.

**The high deck:** The remaining 14 cards are collectively referred to as the *high deck*, and they symbolize the natural forces of the universe. They are, perhaps, the most important and powerful cards in the deck.

**Focus cards:** When the tarokka are used to determine information about a specific

individual, a *focus card* must be selected. This often symbolizes the individual who is seeking knowledge or the one on whose behalf the Vistani is casting the tarokka. (When information about a third party is sought, the focus card represents that individual.) The selection of an appropriate focus card is generally easy. The fortuneteller need only know the type of person who is to be represented and select the archetype card that is tied to his or her character class. Thus, a priest would be represented by the *Master of Glyphs* and a thief by the *Master of Coins*. It is possible to select a more specific focus card by using the card that matches both the class and alignment of an individual (see "The Lesser Deck" section, below).

Cards from the high deck are sometimes used as foci too, depending on the nature of the information sought. For example, if a Vistana is consulted about the lord of a domain, then it would be correct to use the *Darklord* card. If information is sought about the history of an ancient magical sword, then the *Artifact* card would be used.

## History of the Tarokka

The origins of the tarokka are lost in history, although legends and tales abound, purporting to describe the creation of the first deck. It may be that the deck originated outside Ravenloft and came into the Demiplane of Dread later. If the Vistani originated outside of Ravenloft and then migrated into the land, it could well be that the cards came with them.

The illustrations found on each of the tarokka cards and their meanings are traditional. Because each deck is created by the individual who plans to use it, there is great diversity in both the quality and exact rendering of the images on the cards. Some are virtual masterpieces, finely crafted and worth vast sums of money. Others are crude and have no monetary value. In either case the ability of the cards to call forth information about the future is far more precious than the monetary value of the physical deck could ever be—the artistic value of a deck has no connection at all to its prophetic power.

The only times that a deck of tarokka cards will function for someone other than the hand that created them is when they are designed and crafted with the intention of making a gift of them, or when they are passed to an heir upon the creator's death. In the former case the artist must be intimately familiar with the person for whom the cards are created, and in the latter case the heir must be a direct blood descendent of the artist.

The oldest known tarokka deck is believed to belong to Gabrielle Aderre, lord of Invidia. It is said that these cards were created by Madame Eva, the first Vistana in Ravenloft, and that they passed from mother to daughter until at last they came into Gabrielle's hands. Her ability to use the cards is purported to be outstanding, although anything that pertains to the Vistani or matters outside of her domain are impossible for her to foretell.

## Creating a Tarokka Deck

While anyone can craft a deck of tarokka cards, only someone Vistani blood can give them the gift of prophesy. In general the purer the blood, the more accurate the cards. Thus, those who are Vistani half-breeds are seldom as talented in prophesy. A tarokka deck can be fashioned from almost any available and remotely suitable materials. The quality of the renderings is, as has been mentioned, highly variable, as is the amount of time required for their creation.

There are, however, two key elements to the fashioning of a deck. The first and most important is that the pigments used to create the cards must be blended with the blood of the artist. In the case of cards made as a gift, the blood of the recipient is needed. The exact amount of blood varies, but the more that's used, the more exact the readings will be.

The second factor to keep in mind is that these cards can only be crafted under the light of a full moon. Thus, there are but three days per month when the artist may work. If the cards are crude and simple, two or three month's worth of work might be sufficient. More impressive decks, like the one belonging to Gabrielle Aderre, may take many years to design. Again, the amount of time devoted to the creation of the cards seems to have an impact on their accuracy.

Once the cards are crafted, they must be stored in accordance with ancient tradition or they will lose their power. When not in use the tarokka cards must be wrapped in silk and placed in a wooden box. If the box or silk that the cards are kept in is ever destroyed, the cards lose their power and a new deck must be created. Similarly, if one of the cards is ever destroyed, the entire deck must be replaced. Minor damage to the cards, caused by normal usage, does not retard their prophetic powers.

As an aside, there are said to be a few tarokka decks which have powers that are not tied to any living creature, called *wild decks.* While there are probably no more than a half-dozen such decks in existence, these are regarded as powerful and potentially very dangerous by the Vistani. (A *deck of many things* is a typical example of a wild deck.)

## The Lesser Deck

Each of the cards in the lesser deck has a special meaning and a unique importance, marked by the card's name and the illustration on it. Over the next few pages, the meaning of each card is presented by suit and its symbolism discussed.

The numeric value of each card in the lesser deck is important. The cards are numbered 1 through 9, with each having its own alignment. The archetype card has no alignment, for it embodies all that is good and evil, lawful and

chaotic, about a given way of life. The specific alignments of the cards are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Master—no alignment | 5—true neutral |
| 1—chaotic good | 6—chaotic neutral |
| 2—lawful good | 7—neutral evil |
| 3—neutral good | 8—lawful evil |
| 4—lawful neutral | 9—chaotic evil |

## Swords

This suit symbolizes aggression and violence. It is the suit of the warrior, be he or she a noble paladin or a lowly slave-gladiator. It also carries the power of governments and leaders. When used for good it means that justice will be triumphant and that kings will be just and fair. The evil cards indicate things like brutality or the unchecked aggression of a military state. In elemental terms it symbolizes the earth, which supplies the steel from which weapons are forged, and the stone from which castles are erected.

**Master (the Warrior):** This represents those who use force or violence to accomplish their goals, or those who lead others. It is used as the focus card for any character of the warrior class or for anything that seems strongly tied to the Elemental Plane of Earth. The face of this card depicts the ultimate warrior. There is no sign of the creature within the armor, as the human form is wholly cloaked in metal. It is strength and force personified. When revealed in a casting of the tarokka, it marks a violent encounter of some sort. Whether that conflict will be a brawl or an all-out war is not revealed by this card, but it may be divulged by others.

**1 (the Avenger):** This card has affinity for those of chaotic good alignment. The illustration depicts a lone knight who holds a blazing sword above his head. At his feet are the bodies of his many enemies, brought down after great hardship and struggle. This card is symbolic of ultimate justice and revenge for great wrongs. It is symbolic of those who are on grand quests to rid the world of ancient evils. It is also the card of the wandering knight, a noble warrior who owes allegiance to no lord.

**2 (the Paladin):** This card is associated with all just and noble warriors. It is a friend to all who wield the sword and are lawful good in alignment. The picture depicts a proud and noble paladin who kneels with his sword held point-down before him. An unseen figure is knighting the great warrior with another sword, marking him as a man of honor and integrity. This card is symbolic of all who pursue ultimate good through law and order. Unlike the reckless, haphazard good of the previous card, this goodness depends upon careful planning and strict adherence to codes of honor and fair play. In its most basic terms it symbolizes the triumph of good over evil.

**3 (the Soldier):** Like many of the neutral cards, this one is not as clear and solid in its interpretation as the others. It symbolizes the struggle of good against evil, but not its eventual triumph. This card does not foreshadow doom, though; it just refuses to answer the question of who will win. It is often a sign that the outcome of a conflict between good and evil is difficult to predict, and that chance will be the deciding factor. The illustration on the card depicts a swordsman facing a rack with three blades in it. One is black, one is white, and one is gray. The swordsman is reaching out to claim a weapon, but which sword it will be remains unknown.

**4 (the Mercenary):** This card is symbolic of those who use power and weapons for personal gain. It marks those who will serve either good or evil, but who follow a code of conduct that marks them as professional soldiers. This does not imply that the individual is deceitful or traitorous—far from it. Although those who follow this path can serve either good or evil, they honor their commitments in the matter. This card is often seen to represent inner strength and fortitude, a mark of great endurance and stamina in the

face of physical hardship. This thought is perfectly captured in the card's illustration, which depicts four warriors gathered around a chest of gold and jewels. Their swords are raised so that the four points touch, as they seal an oath to stand by each other through whatever lies ahead.

**5 (the Myrmidon):** This card marks the sudden reversal of fate so common in the chaos of warfare. This is depicted on the face of the card by a single man, unarmed and unarmored, facing a rolling cloud of fog with five mysterious shadows stepping out of it. Only their five swords are clearly visible. Will they be friends or enemies? This card often indicates a sudden upheaval in battle and perhaps a triumph by the underdog over an enemy. Thus it can herald the slaying of a great monster—a dragon or the like—with but a single magical arrow. However, just as often it predicts doom, as a clever plan is foiled by the hand of fate. All neutral-aligned warriors are kindred to this card and its essence.

**6 (the Berserker):** This card depicts the brutal and barbaric side of war. The illustration shows a mighty warrior from some northern clime. He holds his sword high over his head, ready for battle. Five other swords pierce his body, certainly delivering a fatal wound. The warrior does not die, however—his frenzy sustains him. Those who are drawn to this card are chaotic in nature, with no concern for good or evil. They see combat as a challenge and adventure. The morality of their actions escapes them. It often indicates unforeseen consequences of rash actions or the rage and bestial instinct of the rampaging lunatic. This card is frequently associated with lycanthropes, whose bestial nature is unseen until they strike.

**7 (the Hooded Man):** This card represents those who are prone to evil acts through either stupidity or deception. It is the mark of all neutral evil warriors or those who are thrust into a situation where violence seems to be the only solution. It also symbolizes bigotry, intolerance, and xenophobia. In this role it signifies those who lash out at the unknown stranger simply out of ignorance or fear that he or she may be a threat. Thus it often indicates an outside presence or newcomer who must be dealt with. The illustration depicts a crowd of peasants with torches and various improvised weapons, led by a band of seven sinister riders who hold dark swords high above them. Their faces are hidden by hoods. It is impossible to say what their mission is, but it certainly cannot be one of goodness or justice.

**8 (the Dictator):** This card calls to mind all that is wrong and evil in government or leadership. It is the mark of the despot and tyrant who rules with violence, fear, and intimidation. It also symbolizes the mad general who leads armies into suicidal battles or orders them to stand against hopeless odds. The rendering on the card speaks of evil domination and oppression. On its face, a helpless man is pinned to the ground by four iron chains. His heavy bonds are anchored to the ground by eight swords, their points thrust into the earth. This card symbolizes those who wield power unjustly or who have usurped the reins of government from their rightful holder. It often indicates the influence of an evil army like the dreaded *Kargat* of Darkon.

**9 (the Torturer):** The depiction on this card says all that need be known to understand it. Nine swords have been placed in a wide brazier of hot, burning coals. Their blades glow with heat and stand ready to be used on the broken, battered prisoner who hangs from chains on the wall behind. His spirit is gone; to subject him to further tortures is simply an exercise in cruelty for evil's sake. Thus this card heralds the coming of suffering and merciless cruelty. It is the mark of the sadist and the wholly consuming evil of the nihilist. It symbolizes ultimate evil and the hand of the dark powers. No good comes of this card, and all who know the tarokka shudder when it appears before them.

## Coins

This suit symbolizes avarice and the desire for personal gains. It is also symbolic of gluttony, lust, and other obsessions. For the good it can indicate accumulation of wealth for a charity or just cause. For the evil it can mark the miser or greedy merchant who cheats his customers, or the thief who comes in the night. It is a suit that is associated with both wealth and poverty. The old adage that "the love of money is the root of all evil" is clearly reflected in the darker cards of this suit.

The elemental symbol of this suit is Air, from which the mists descend to cover movements of the thief and mask the identity of criminals. Air is fleeting and nebulous, leaving one with no idea of the power that it has. Just as the unseen wind can overturn ships, so too can the inaudible siren's call of gold move people and nations to excess and ruin.

**Master (the Rogue):** This card represents everyone from thieves and beggars to bankers and merchants. All who hoard money, all who toil to earn it, and all who are denied it can turn to the cards of this suit in hopes of finding answers. This is also the focus card for all characters of the rogue class. The image on this card is that of shadowy figure crouching atop a tower. He is silhouetted by a full moon in the background, so nothing can be seen of his face or features. He has become a shadow, one with the night, and a mystery to all below. Are his intentions noble or corrupt? The answer cannot be easily told.

**1 (the Swashbuckler):** This card is familiar to those who would step outside the law for the betterment of their fellows. Criminals who "rob from the rich to give to the poor" will find a friend in this card. It generally indicates someone who recognizes the importance of money, but is not drawn to it personally. He can

handle it and feel no desire to own it. The illustration says much about the nature of this card: A slender dandy of a girl stands before an obese and gruff-looking merchant. While the merchant pushes past the smiling rogue, she subtly slips his coin pouch from his belt. One arm is behind her back, and a single gleaming coin drops into the cup of a beggar. All who fall into the category of "noble outlaw" might be represented by this card.

**2 (the Philanthropist):** This card calls to mind acts of charity and giving. Unselfish devotion to others is another common interpretation. There are few cards in the tarokka that carry such a positive message, but there is a dark side to this card. Sometimes it marks the giving of gifts with false intentions (bribery and the like). It can symbolize anything from subtle offers in an effort to "butter up" someone to outright bribes for criminal activity. The picture is touching, and it speaks well of the positive energies that dwell here. Two beggars, one male and one female, stand together. They are dressed in rags and are obviously poor beyond hope. The man holds two coins in his hands; one he keeps for himself and one he gives to the woman.

**3 (the Trader):** This card governs commerce in all its aspects. It speaks of auctions, marketplaces, haggling, and fair exchange. On the dark side it calls to mind smuggling, black markets, and traffic in illicit materials. It does not indicate deceit or false representation of goods and their value, nor does it rule that out. The card shows a man buying something from a vendor. What he buys is a mystery, for it has been placed in a sack tied with a cord, so it is impossible to know whether he procures something legal or of value. In exchange for this parcel the customer drops three coins into the hand of the peddler. The artwork pictures the coins in midair, indicative of the exchange of currency that is at the heart of this card.

**4 (the Merchant):** Unlike the previous card, this one warns of deceit and falsehood in the marketplace. It hints that all is not as it seems in some manner of business transaction. Perhaps the goods offered are not all that the vendor claims, or maybe the customer pays with counterfeit currency. Whatever the truth of the matter, this card reminds the buyer to beware and encourages the merchant to keep a careful watch on customers. Normally a negative card, the *Merchant* also has a positive side: It sometimes indicates a rare find in the market—perhaps a vendor does not know the value of his or her merchandise and is selling it at a rare, low price. The artwork is fairly simple, depicting a box, bound and unopened, on a wooden counter top. Four coins sit beside it. An exchange is being made, but the goods and the faces of those who make the deal are hidden. Thus the reader cannot tell who is profiting most by the exchange.

**5 (the Guildsman):** This card speaks not only of money and economics, but of sharing and fairness. It invokes the image of a mercantile guild in which all members work together. If business is bad they all share the burden equally. If it is good they all profit accordingly. When one of their number is robbed or suffers an unfortunate accident, the others lend him or her whatever is needed to get by. This card speaks only of fraternity and business partnerships—there is no "good" or "bad" in this card, only a call for unity among people of like professions. The illustration shows five men—no doubt merchants—seated around a table. Each has placed a coin on the table before him. They have linked hands in a circle around the table, showing unity.

**6 (the Beggar):** This card marks a sudden change in economic status. Taken as a sign of good it suggests the poor man who becomes rich. This can be a mixed blessing, however, for it may be that the new wealth is acquired only after great hardship. On the other hand, as an evil card it warns of economic ruin or chaos. Again, this is not always a curse, for it may indicate that the rich person will discover a link to those less fortunate, which he or she had ignored or denied for many years. The artwork

on this card shows a wealthy noble standing over a retched beggar. The two are identical in appearance, save for their clothes—a fact neither of them appears to be concerned with. The beggar holds a tin cup, into which the rich man drops six coins. Their physical similarity is a reminder of the fleeting nature of fortune.

**7 (the Thief):** This card is the symbol of all who steal. It includes the violent thug and the silent cut purse. In the tarokka it marks the loss or acquisition of something important to the individual. Thus it often calls to mind thoughts of a stolen heirloom or favored weapon. It can also be less material than that. It has been known, for example, to herald the disfigurement of a particularly narcissistic individual, or the crippling of a proud athlete. In short, it warns that whatever is valued may be at risk. Conversely, it can speak of an acquisition. Often such gains come through deceit, treachery, or even violence. This fact is brought home in the illustration, which depicts a shadowy female figure standing over the body of a fallen man dressed in the finery of a wealthy merchant. The woman holds a knife and the man lies in a pool of blood. Seven coins gleam on the ground around the body.

**8 (the Tax Collector):** This card notes corruption and deceit, especially among government officials or people who hold important positions in a business. It warns of both covert failings such as embezzlement and of overt actions like the abuse of a watch captain's position to parcel out protection only to those who pay in some way. When taken as a good sign this card speaks of a just official in an otherwise corrupt organization—a member of the thieves' guild who uses his criminal skills to right wrongs, for instance. The illustration is a frightened peasant peering out through the door of his hovel. A mysterious hooded man is holding out his hand and the peasant has just placed eight coins in it. Clearly this must be more than the simple man can afford.

**9 (the Miser):** This card indicates someone who hoards vast wealth. He might keep his fortune to himself, living a bleak and miserable life despite his wealth, or he might live a life of debauchery, spending his money in pursuit of physical pleasures and excesses. If taken in a good light it can indicate the sudden discovery of a fortune or the attainment of some important goal. The face of the card shows an old and unhappy-looking fellow seated at a table with a single candle burning on it. Cash boxes and pouches of gold are stacked on the table. A pile of nine coins stands before the aged miser. His life is clearly bleak and empty, for no sign of his great wealth is in evidence.

## Stars

This suit symbolizes the desire for personal power and control over things beyond the ken of mortal men. As a force for good it symbolizes the sage who seeks to learn more so that he or she may ease the suffering or better the lot of all. As a force for evil it represents the cruel and abusive pursuit of knowledge or power at all costs.

The elemental ties of this suit are with Fire, which represents the power of magic and an unquenchable hunger for new sources of sustenance and knowledge. Its nature is a mixed blessing, providing warmth and comfort one second and becoming an all-consuming destroyer the next, which is important to the understanding of its role in the tarokka.

**Master (the Wizard):** This card is the patron of all who hunger for mystical power or knowledge. It is held to represent wizards, scholars, sages, and intellectuals. The artwork on the card depicts a slender wizard dressed in a flowing dark cloak and swirling robes. A shadow hangs across his face, making it impossible to see beneath the hood. His hands are covered in black gloves, and no trace of his flesh is exposed. An aura of energy surrounds him, for he is magic and power personified. This card is the focus of all wizard characters. When this card appears, it means mystery and riddles, the unknown and the supernatural. Any

occurrence of this card alerts the Vistana to the presence of hidden knowledge or secrets that must be researched and mastered if success is to be gained.

**1 (the Transmuter):** This card tells of knowledge and information that is unchecked by compassion or mercy. It heralds the approach of a new discovery that will bring great hardship to the land or the coming of new and unexpected things. An example of such an event is a newly researched magical spell that has disastrous side effects when cast. It often indicates success at a chosen task, but unforeseen consequences and eventual chaos. There are those who see it as indicating a lack of foresight and careful planning, which leads to short-term victory but long-term defeat. It has also been known to warn that a person has lost sight of original goals or values—what began as simple research has turned into an obsession. The illustration shows a wise and learned sage reading a book by candlelight. He is cloistered away and has no contact with the outside world. His only concern is with the book before him.

**2 (the Diviner):** This card embodies the healing arts and science, or magic that is put to good and just use. It marks the pursuit of knowledge, tempered by a solid understanding of the ramifications that surround it. All who toil for the betterment of humanity find a friend in this card. Its face depicts two wizards, one of them kneeling and holding a white tome open before his standing companion. The standing wizard is clearly older and presumably wiser. He wears a crown on his head, which shows him to be noble and proud. He is guided but not mastered by the knowledge presented in the tome. Two stars hang over them in the sky, shining brightly with the radiance of knowledge and the warm glow of compassion. When this card emerges, it is a sign that there is important knowledge to be gained and that acquisition of this information will be wholly beneficial. It can sometimes indicate a compassionate deception or white lie, but that is uncommon, for it generally symbolizes truth and honesty, especially among sages, prophets, and the like.

**3 (the Enchanter):** This card marks the determination of the scholar or wizard. It often indicates initial failure and hardship, followed by overcoming obstacles and gaining eventual victory and enlightenment. The illustration shows this clearly: A lone wizard struggles along a narrow and broken bridge. All around him a violent storm rages, and he is bent against the wind that would blow him back and stop his journey. Just ahead, at the end of the bridge, is a small plateau. Three bright stars hang above this area, their glow protecting it from the ravages of the storm and offering sanctuary to the traveler. Although this card may predict failure and its appearance is reason for concern, it also speaks of hope, so it is not to be wholly feared when it arises.

**4 (the Abjurer):** Like the previous card, this one speaks of determination and effort. It does not portend initial defeat, nor does it suggest ultimate victory. Rather, it indicates only hardship and confusion that must be sorted through before any progress can be made. It governs all manner of research and deductions, often equated with the scientific method and similar exercises in logic. It warns those involved to avoid assumptions and to seek proof of all things before believing them. It often hints that important information has been overlooked in the haste to discover new truths. This card is important to all investigators. The illustration on this card depicts a beautiful wizardess standing before a flawless crystal ball. Light from the orb, symbolizing knowledge and truth, spreads outward to illuminate the room. A rectangular banner hangs on the wall behind the woman. It is divided into quadrants, each of which holds a white star.

**5 (the Elementalist):** This card stands for the natural forces of the cosmos and the ways in which they affect mankind. It heralds the ultimate triumph of nature over all humanity's works, but it also notes the ability of mortals to

hold back nature's wrath and master the environment. It is generally taken as a sign that some elemental force—be it natural disaster, sudden rain, or a herd of foraging animals—will come into play. Its meaning is not always negative, for it is frequently the precursor of good luck as well, heralding a bountiful harvest or successful hunting expedition. The picture is that of a wizard with his arms spread wide over his head. Five stars form an arch between his palms, shielding him from the bright sun above. All around the wizard is lush vegetation, and a gentle stream runs past his feet.

**6 (the Invoker):** The picture on this card is dark and mysterious: An innocent-looking young wizardess stands over a table with six books on it. Each of these tomes is closed and latched. The books are old and look evil, each with a single star on its cover. The young woman looks pensive; she longs read their text, but she worries that she might regret acquiring forbidden knowledge. That is the importance of this card: It marks research into areas that mortals were not meant to explore. It often predicts the discovery of some ancient lore that will bring evil or disaster upon those who study it. This card is often associated with grave robbers, for they trespass in realms forbidden to mortal men. In the strictest of game terms, it often foreshadows a Ravenloft powers check or similar direct confrontation with evil.

**7 (the Illusionist):** This card tells of lies and deceit. It warns that much is hidden from even the most careful observer, and that there may be far more to a situation than suspected. It hints at grand conspiracies, secret societies, and organized rings of spies or informants. It also indicates that information is gathered in a covert manner. On a personal level it often points out the presence of a dupe or traitor. It sometimes warns that the focus of the reading is being tricked into acting against his or her best interests. This card pictures a dark and powerful-looking wizard receiving a report from some underling. They are in an area of seven standing stones, each of which is marked with a star. The stars glow faintly, as if intent on watching what goes on in their presence.

**8 (the Necromancer):** This card speaks of a learned person who has turned to the pursuit of evil. Great talents that could go far in the service of others have been channeled inward to serve personal desire for power and knowledge. The artwork shows a hooded wizard who stands alone in a graveyard, under the light of the full moon. Eight tombstones stand before him, each marked with a single star. Skeletal hands protrude from the soil of the graves, as the undead begin to claw themselves free of their earthly confines. This card is, as one might guess, linked to all manner of undead beings. While some might think that this card signals death in the future, this is seldom the case. It is far more common for this card to warn of a desire for power, or an unnatural fascination or obsession. It indicates greed for knowledge and power, but not always for wealth. Because those who master the undead often bear such a curse, themselves, it is also taken to indicate that someone might be sowing the seeds of personal destruction.

**9 (the Conjurer):** This card is the ultimate in dark magic and forbidden knowledge. It heralds perpetuation of ignorance and repression of truth. All who deny knowledge are tied to this card. It also tells of those who draw their power from unnatural sources and have dealings with agents of darkness. This card holds special significance for those who treat with the most powerful of evil forces. It customarily points to a master of evil beings, but it can just as often indicate one who has become a pawn of dark powers that he or she hoped to master. The artwork speaks of the element of Fire, which gives this suit power, for a wild and alluring wizardess stands at the center of a ring of nine stars. Outside the ring, flames lick upward and fill the field of vision. The temptress in the circle holds out her arms, but to accept her embrace is invite destruction, for the flames will permit no man to reach her.

## Glyphs

This suit symbolizes spirituality, faith, and inner strength. It is the suit of the priest and of all those who devote themselves to the service of a deity or higher power. On the side of good they show willpower and devotion to duty. On the side of evil they show weakness of character, betrayal, and self-doubt.

The elemental symbol of this suit is Water, which purifies the body and refreshes the spirit. In this respect it can indicate health and healing, or illness and disease.

**Master (the Priest):** This card is the patron of all those who follow a deity or system of values, or those who pay homage to the natural forces of the universe. It embodies piety when good and impiety when evil. It represents the beliefs and values of all who are religious, or who in some way the servants of a greater good or evil. The illustration shows a robed priest holding his hands upward in respect to some unseen force. A radiant shaft of light gleams through the surrounding darkness to illuminate the priest, who is dressed in a hooded cloak with a mask over his face. Whether the priest is a servant of good or evil remains unknown, for no sign of his true body is visible. He is no longer a man, but now has become one with whatever force he serves, be it law or chaos, good or evil.

**1 (the Monk):** This card tells of the serene and satisfying life of the cloistered. It stresses inner strength and self-reliance. Nothing happens for good or evil that does not begin within. Only by contemplating that which resides in the heart can one hope to understand that which transpires around him or her. When read for good it tells of a tranquility and self-reliance that transcends the outside world. When taken as a mark of evil it depicts arrogance and egoism. The illustration shows a single man sitting on a wooden bench in a simple and featureless room. His head is

bowed in prayer and his face is barely visible. He wears the simple robes of a monastic order, with nothing to mark him as an individual. The only thing out of the ordinary in this room is the single glyph that adorns the blank wall above the monk's head.

**2 (the Missionary):** This the patron of those who spread their teachings and faith to others. When taken for good it indicates the spread of knowledge and wisdom, the attainment of enlightenment, and a better life for all. As an evil omen it warns of the spread of fear and ignorance, a time when dark forces will have sway over the land. Obviously, in a place like Ravenloft the latter aspect is most commonly seen. The artwork depicts a man atop a podium, addressing a mesmerized crowd. No doubt he is educating them in the ways of his faith. He holds two holy books over his head for all to see, each of which bears a glyph.

**3 (the Healer):** This card is a friend to all who practice the healing arts. The most skilled of physicians or the holiest of clerics will find this card beneficial. When taken as an omen of evil, however, it warns of illness and disease, perhaps even a supernatural curse. The artwork shows a stricken man in bed. A priestess has placed her hand on his head and a warm glow indicates the power of her healing magic. On the wall above the bed, three glyphs have been placed to ward off the influences of evil.

**4 (the Shepherd):** This card calls forth the devotion and dedication of friends and allies. It marks those who are loyal companions and devoted followers. Such people watch over those around them, just as a shepherd watches over the flock. On the other side of the coin, this card is a dark and dangerous force of evil. It marks the failing of a trusted friend, either accidentally or purposefully. It suggests that too much trust or responsibility has been placed upon someone unworthy to bear such a burden. The illustration is simple enough, for it shows a shepherd tending his flock. His dress is simple but neat and he leans on a long staff. Four glyphs are cut into the wooden pole.

**5 (the Druid):** As one might expect, this card reflects the values of nature and the inherent divinity of the animal kingdom. Having no prejudice toward good or evil, animals act only according to their instincts. As a sign of good this indicates spiritual health, a freedom from mental domination, and a release from duties or emotions. When taken for evil it tends to point toward an inner turmoil that disturbs the natural serenity of the mind. In some cases it heralds mental illness or a similar disorder. It is often taken to reflect upon the wisdom of the individual, with a negative aspect indicating that foolish decision may be in the offing. The artwork shows a druid standing in a grove of five trees. Each tree has been marked with a glyph to protect it from disease and parasites.

**6 (the Anarchist):** This card reflects the fact that true stasis is an artificial construct of the human mind. Nature demands that all things must be in constant change, and that all is fleeting and transient. When taken to show good it denotes improvement and benefit in some aspect of one's life or in the general condition of mankind. When taken negatively it calls to mind entropy, decay, and collapse. This card is the friend of all who seek to better themselves or bring down an enemy, but opposes all who like things just as they are, for nothing can remain that way. The art on this card shows a dark and mysterious priest atop a tall altar built from six slabs of stone, each marked with a glyph. His hands are outstretched to the heavens, and lightning lashes down to engulf him. Will this divine stroke mean disaster or is this but the first stage in a transformation that will lead to greater power and understanding?

**7 (the Charlatan):** This card does not normally bode well, for it invokes images of spies and tricksters. It can mean more positive things, like an enemy who turns out to be a friend or ally, but it normally marks a foe where none was suspected. This card is a cautionary one in either respect, for it is a reminder to watch others carefully and make every effort to

understand their motivations. The artwork shows a tall, slender woman holding a mask before her face. The forehead of the disguise bears seven glyphs, no doubt important in the role she plays. This card does not usually denote changes in someone who is well known. Thus it seldom marks a long-time friend turning on companions. Rather, it tends to pertain to someone who is less well known and usually taken for granted or perhaps not even fully acknowledged.

**8 (the Bishop):** This card pays homage to those who plan, plot, or scheme. It marks a stern will and strict adherence to a code of some sort, either good or evil. It often speaks of those who lay careful schemes and manipulate others to achieve their own ends. On the evil side this can indicate the existence of a controlling presence behind a series of seemingly unrelated dark incidents. For good it can reflect a paladin's strict devotion to a rigid code of honor. The artwork shows a regal-looking cleric seated on a grand throne. His face looks dark and sinister, but his eyes are bright and thoughtful. A series of eight glyphs are set into the back of the throne, which ring his head like a halo.

**9 (the Traitor):** Among the most feared of tarokka cards, this one marks betrayal by someone close and trusted. Anyone that turns on those who depend upon him or her is marked by this card. When taken in a more positive light this card can indicate a weak link in the people employed by an enemy. Perhaps a minister who serves a tyrant can be convinced to join forces with those who would bring the tyrant down. The artwork depicts a lone figure dressed in a dark cloak, marked with nine glyphs. Is he friend or foe, good or evil? There is no way of knowing, but his voluminous robe and sneaking posture suggest that he is up to no good.

## The High Deck

The remaining 14 cards of the tarokka are considered far more powerful than those of the lesser deck, and they have a special importance in the fortunetelling rituals of the Vistani. These cards are not considered to be of one suit, although they are often denoted with a crown icon to mark their importance. Rather, each card is considered an important power in its own right. Thus, if one of these cards comes out in a casting and seems to contradict the predictions of a card from the lesser deck, the Vistani will always assume that it takes precedence over its lesser brothers.

**The Artifact:** This card brings to light the importance of some physical object. It might be an ancient and valuable tome or a simple and unassuming gold ring. Whatever the object, it is of unparalleled importance to the subject of the tarokka reading. It might be that this object is the primary weapon that its owner depends upon, or it could be the key to an enemy's ultimate defeat. Whatever the object and its role, this card marks it as a thing of absolute necessity. The depiction on this card is a dark room. In the center of the room is a pedestal, atop which sits an ornate and evil-looking crown that glows faintly.

**The Beast:** This card calls to mind the savage that lurks within even the most civilized individual. It does not mean that this animal nature will surface, only that its influence will be felt. It does, however, often herald crimes of passion or similar rash acts. It is also considered the patron card of all lycanthropes or other shapechangers. The illustration depicts a werewolf silhouetted before the full moon and howling into the night.

**The Broken One:** This card indicates defeat, failure, and despair. It can even herald a complete mental collapse or breakdown. In some cases it may warn of the future that lies before the subject of the reading; in others it may indicate that such a person will be met. The illustration depicts a young woman utterly devoid of emotion and life.

**The Darklord:** This card brings to mind images of the foul rulers of Ravenloft's many domains. In truth it is seldom that horrible when it occurs in the tarokka. What it does indicate is a single important individual. Often evil or tyrannical in nature, this master may either have an army of minions at his or her disposal or may simply command the actions of a few thugs. His or her intentions might be of great consequence (the construction of a shrine to the powers of evil, for instance) or they might be important to only a few (the slaying of a rival in love). Whatever the nature of this card, it is ominous and foreboding. Depending on its position in the tarokka, this card might predict the existence of such a person, a rise to power, or even defeat and collapse. The artwork on the card depicts a twisted and evil-looking man with bestial features seated on a throne. In his withered hand he clutches a foul scepter, and on his head rests a dark crown.

**The Donjon:** This card depicts a tall stone tower surrounded by darkness, although a thin crescent of a moon provides some faint light. Near the top of the tower, a single barred window is lighted from within. A silhouetted figure stands at the window and looks out, desiring to escape. As might be expected, this card warns of isolation or imprisonment. In some cases it might be voluntary, like the entering of a monastery, while in others it might be force. While the effects of this card are not always physical, they always represent confinement. It may be that a person who previously has been a open-minded individual is becoming more conservative in thought, thus indicating a sort of mental imprisonment.

**The Esper:** This card is a reminder of the powers of the mind. Sometimes this can simply be a keen intellect or a sudden inspiration. On other occasions it can denote the actual use of psionic powers. The illustration shows a man in some sort of trance. Rings of mental energy radiate out from his head.

**The Ghost:** When this card appears from the tarokka deck, it warns of the looming past. Some aspect of days gone by, either personal or general, is about to return and affect the actions of the present. Thus the ghost is not necessarily a warning of an undead monster (although it can be read as such). More often it indicates something less supernatural, like an old debt or a forgotten enemy. It can also speak of an ancient curse or similar magical fate. The illustration is dark and ominous, as befits the somber warnings of this card. An old man kneels beside a casket, head bowed in prayer. A faint spectre rises from the casket and reaches out to him. He does not see it, and it is impossible to say if it will strike him down.

**The Hangman:** The picture on this card does not bode well: A black-robed figure, face covered by an executioner's hood, stands atop a gallows. A noose hangs to the side, waiting to stretch the neck of a criminal. In many cases this indicates that someone will be caught doing something wrong—a criminal might be arrested, an unfaithful lover might be exposed, and so on. In some cases the charges against a person are true, but this card can also speak of a lynch mob or false accusation. The basis of the crime or misstep is not indicated, only the result of conviction or apprehension.

**The Horseman:** This card foreshadows death and disaster, as is clearly portrayed in the artwork upon it: A skeletal horse rears up, fire spewing from its nostrils, illuminating both itself and its rider. The rider is a skeleton dressed in flowing black robes and holding a scythe over its head. The ground around it is dotted with gravestones, marking the rider as one that foreshadows death. This card does not *always* speak of death though, which is a common belief. It can indicate a less serious fate such as a bad accident or defeat in an important battle. It can also be reflected in less violent ways, such as the loss of one's wealth or magical powers. Whatever the actual event predicted, it is sure to be viewed as a calamity of unequalled dimensions by those it affects.

**The Innocent:** This card, also called the *Victim*, denotes a defenseless person who is of great importance. It is important to note that "defenseless" does not necessarily mean that the individual is weak or unable to fight off a potential foe. Indeed, it could indicate a powerful individual who is simply unaware of danger. More often it tells of a person unable to handle the events that are beginning to surround him or her. The illustration depicts a lovely young maiden dressed in a flowing white gown. Her hair blows in the wind and she holds a freshly plucked flower from the garden around her.

**The Marionette:** This card indicates the presence of a traitor or a minion of some greater power. It often warns that someone who appears to be important, either friend or foe, is really an underling who obeys another's orders. In less material ways it can indicate a hidden agenda on the part of a person. In the most deceptive of all cases it might note that the pawn is unaware that he or she does another's bidding. It may even be that the object of this card is under some form of mental domination. The illustration on this card depicts control of by unseen master—a marionette dangles from strings held by a hand whose owner is out of sight. The puppet is fairly bland and featureless, but it is marked as a king by the simple crown on its head.

**The Mists:** This card invokes the image of the enigmatic Mists of Ravenloft, to warn of mysteries and the unexpected. It often hints that something surprising waits in the future or that some important event is taking place, the nature of which the subject of the tarokka casting has no knowledge. It can speak to any manner of mystery, any hidden information or clue that has not yet come to light. It is also known to warn of an unexpected voyage. Just as the Mists of Ravenloft carry people far from their original paths, so too can this card herald an impromptu odyssey. The artwork depicts a woman of some wealth sitting side-saddle on a riding horse, mists swirling.

**The Raven:** This card indicates a hidden source of information or a secret potential for good. It might be that this good will be within the subject or that he or she will soon come into contact with a new ally or creature of good intent. In some cases this card need not indicate a person, but could denote a beneficial magical spell, object, or even just a fortunate turn of events. The face of this card depicts a wise-looking raven.

**The Temptress:** This card depicting a sultry and inviting woman in a opulently decorated room indicates some manner of temptation that will lead a person away from valued things. Often a person who is branded by this card is not aware that his or her values are compromised. For example, it might indicate a cleric who devotedly seeks to raise money to build a temple, but in so doing he loses sight of the fact that the gold could be put to much better use by helping the needy. Of course, such unconscious seduction is not always the rule. An individual might willingly decide, either in a moment of passion or as a result of some deliberation, to set aside all principles.

## Performing a Tarokka Reading

Now that each of the cards in the deck has been defined, it is time to move on to the use of the tarokka. First, there are four ways that the cards can be used by Dungeon Masters to simulate fortunetelling in a RAVENLOFT game. Each of them offers its own advantages and drawbacks. Depending upon the importance of the fortunetelling session to the scenario, one of the techniques will be most appropriate.

**Stacking the deck:** If the casting is of extreme importance to the outcome of the game, the Dungeon Master can stack the deck. That is, certain cards are placed at the top of the deck so they will come out in a desired sequence when dealt. This is a good way to put

across specific pieces of information and provide exact clues to the party. This is the reading method employed in the RAVENLOFT adventure module *Roots of Evil* (9413).

The advantage of this technique is that it allows for an exact and direct fortunetelling. The meaning of the cards is clear and absolute, a fact that will delight players at the end of a session, for even if they did not understand the significance of the individual cards at the time of the casting, they will find that they become perfectly clear upon retrospection.

The disadvantage in this technique is fairly obvious: The deck is not shuffled before the tarokka is cast, and any accidental disturbance of the deck requires a break while the Dungeon Master restores the cards to the desired sequence. Some people might palm the important cards and then add them to the top of the deck after shuffling, but that's a pretty good trick. Besides, if lots of cards are needed for the reading, their absence may be noticed by the players.

**Special cards:** This technique requires the Dungeon Master to pre-select the cards that have relevance to the scenario and make note of their meanings. It is necessary to deal out the whole deck with this technique, even if all of the important cards have come up, which masks the true nature of the stage craft employed. This technique is used to great effect in the RAVENLOFT adventure module *Touch of Death* (9338).

As each card is placed on the table, the fortuneteller indicates that certain cards have some importance due to their "relative positions in the pattern." Thus, if the villain in an adventure is a chaotic evil wizard, then the 9 of stars would be taken to indicate the nature of the adversary, no matter where it falls.

There are two main advantages to this technique. The first is that it gives the Dungeon Master complete control over the meaning of the cards. The second is that the players can be allowed to shuffle or cut the deck before the cards are consulted. This lessens their suspicions about the reading being controlled.

The only disadvantage to this method is that the Dungeon Master may be perceived as drawing out the casting by dealing every single card, and that detracts from the mood. Similarly, it may become clear that the Dungeon Master is improvising a pattern as the deal is drawn out.

**Random determination:** With this method certain elements of the plot are flexible, and the fall of the cards dictates their final form. For example, if the player characters are going to be stalking a vampire, the Dungeon Master might decide that the tarokka deck will be used to determine the location of the monster's lair, its secret weakness, and which of several nonplayer characters will be its pawn. Each of these factors is assigned a value depending on the card that comes up to represent it. Thus, to determine the first element of the monster's plot, the Dungeon Master might set up a table that reads like this:

| Card Suit | Vampire |
|---|---|
| Coins | The abandoned gold mine |
| Glyphs | The graveyard at the ruined church |
| Stars | The catacombs beneath the mad wizard's tower |
| Swords | A series of hidden rooms in the castle of the king himself |
| Other | The vampire has no lair, but wanders from place to place |

When the players announce that their characters are going to consult a fortuneteller, the Dungeon Master simply lays out the cards in any pattern, perhaps one of those presented on page 126.

There are lots of advantages to this method. First, the players can shuffle the cards and cut them, assuring them that the deck has not been stacked. Second, it allows the Dungeon Master to announce what each card will mean before revealing it. For example, "This card will tell us where the fiend you seek lives." This

adds a great deal to the atmosphere of the game, lends a feeling of tremendous importance to the cards, and it makes them an actual part of the game.

There is one major drawback to this method of tarokka casting: preparation time. Besides designing an adventure, the Dungeon Master must consider each possible change that will be generated by the cards. In some cases this is fairly easy, but in others it might take quite some time. Fortunately, there are some shortcuts that can be used to lessen this preparation time. In the above example the Dungeon Master might draw up a single map of the vampire's lair. No matter where its hiding place turns out to be—the ruined church or the wizard's catacombs—the same map will be used. One or two of the rooms is given several possible descriptions, depending upon what card shows up. In the above example, an abandoned gold mine would also be a wizard's lab in the catacombs, depending upon whether coins or stars came up in the key position. This accentuates the setting, but by and large the map remains unchanged.

All things considered, this is probably the best method to use when time permits. It is the card-reading method employed in the adventure module *House of Strahd* (9418).

**Luck of the draw:** This method should be reserved for the most clever of Dungeon Masters. It does not rely on anything but his or her wits and ability to fit the results of the tarokka cards into the game. After the cards are laid in any pattern, the meaning of each card is explained extemporaneously, and the Dungeon Master makes note of the key elements of the session. When the casting is complete, he or she alters the adventure to make sure the predictions of the cards come true.

This is the most intellectually challenging method for the Dungeon Master. It depends a great deal on inspiration, referee talent, and quick wits. One advantage of using it is that there is no preparation time at all. If the players unexpectedly announce that they wish to seek a fortuneteller, this method can be used instead of telling the players something like "Your characters cannot locate a Vistana now."

The disadvantage of this technique, of course, is that the cards can sometimes predict some pretty wild things. While the deck was designed to be intentionally vague and allow numerous interpretations of any given card, it's not foolproof.

## Setting the Scene

Before the deck is even touched, the Dungeon Master can take some steps to increase the expectation associated with the tarokka session. Lights can be dimmed in the room, the players may gather around a single table, and perhaps even some aromatic incense could be ignited. Anything that can make things a little more eerie or macabre is a plus.

Prior to casting the tarokka, the fortuneteller should pass around the deck and ask everyone to touch, shuffle, or cut it. For dramatic purposes in a RAVENLOFT game, it is better if the players are asked to shuffle the deck because this allays any suspicions that the deck has been stacked. (Of course, if the deck *has* been stacked, it is best to just have them touch it.)

The drama of this scene can be greatly enhanced if the players are asked to do something in the process of handling the cards. Perhaps the player characters might be required to "focus all their energy" on the deck or speak the name of the reading's subject. (Anything that sets this apart from a simple shuffling and dealing of cards is good.) When the cards have been passed to each player and then returned to the Dungeon Master, he or she should take some final action to "make the cards ready." This could be a simple moment of silence, or it might involve the mumbling of some "magical" words. Again, anything to set the mood of the session will help.

## Laying Out the Cards

The first step in laying out the cards is to place the focus card on the table (see page 107). Once it is in place, the other cards are dealt around it in a pattern. On page 126 are several common patterns in which the tarokka cards can be laid out. These work best for the "stacked deck," "random determination," and "luck of the draw" methods described above.

There are two schools of thought on how to place the cards on the table. Some believe that it is best to deal them face up, while others prefer to distribute them face down. If dealt face up, the more frightening cards (say, the *Darklord*) have an immediate impact on the players—long before the meaning of the card and the significance of its position is read, the players are already filled with dread. However, the mystery of revealing each card slowly is a wonderful mood-setting tool. Exposing each card individually can be something of an event, building the importance of its position in the pattern, and the meaning of the cards that have been revealed before it. When a particularly frightening card turns up this way, it has a sudden and shocking value. Different seers will, of course, employ different techniques. Sometimes, a combination of the two is useful. Cards that represent the past might be laid face up, while those that are to speak of the unknown future might be dealt face down.

The importance of patterns must be stressed. The human mind likes patterns; it looks for them even when none exist. Consider the constellations: It took a wild imagination to create the images that appear (to some) in the sky, and it took an even greater desire for there to even be a pattern that would allow astrology to become so popular. Numerology is the same sort of thing. Thus, players will believe that a pattern lends some manner of respectability to the tarokka casting. Of course, it's really just one game tool in the Dungeon Master's vast repertoire, but the illusion of thought, planning, fate, and determination that is created when laying the cards in a pattern can greatly enhance the mood and tone of the game.

**The basic cross:** Perhaps the most commonly used pattern, the basic cross is both quick to set up and easy to read. It is well suited to each of the Dungeon Master techniques described earlier. There are only five cards in the formation, each of which has a different meaning. This is the best arrangement of cards to use when stacking the deck.

Card 1 is the focus card. It reflects the subject about which information is sought. This card is not dealt at random, but is pulled from the deck prior to the shuffle and placed face up in position 1. Explain to the players that this card is the nexus about which all of the other cards will form.

The cards are dealt—either face down or face up—into the four remaining positions. Generally the order in which they are numbered on the diagram is the order in which they are placed on the table.

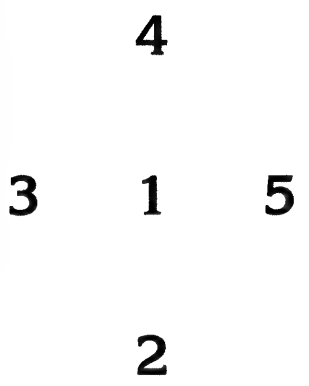
Card 2 represents the past. It tells something of the history of the focus card. Often the correlation between the meaning of this card and the focus card is fairly easy to fabricate. If no obvious relationship comes to light upon the revelation of this card, the Dungeon Master can hint that there is a mystery that the players have not yet solved. Later on, events can be staged that will give the card greater meaning.

Card 3 indicates those things that oppose the focus. Its nature reflects things that may go wrong, individuals who might challenge the focus, or the influence of any number of negative results.

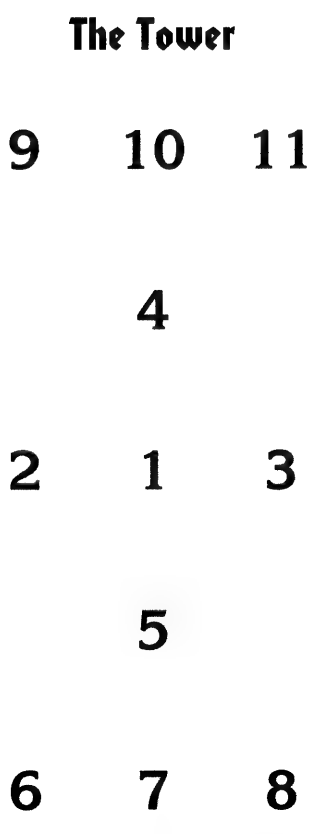
Card 4 represents the future. It warns of looming disasters and makes promises of coming triumphs. Its meaning is always subject to speculation, for the actions of the focus can alter the outcome of the tarokka casting.

Card 5 marks those things that are the focus's friends and allies. It indicates the beneficial things that will speed the object of the casting along to his or her ultimate goal.

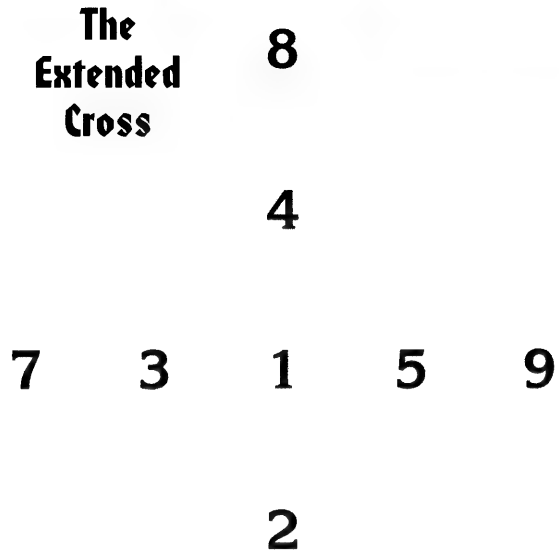
### The Basic Cross



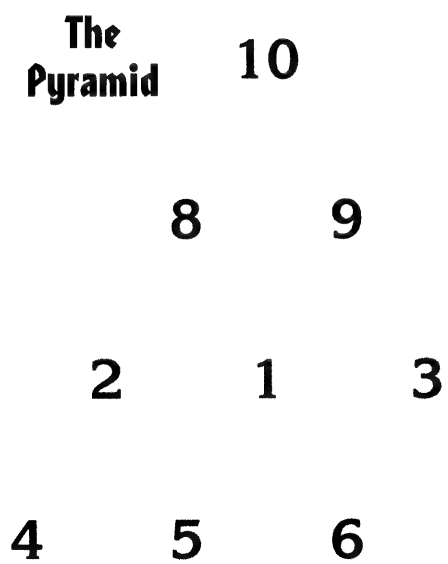

### The Tower




### The Extended Cross




### The Pyramid



**The extended cross:** This is a variant of the basic cross, and it shares many of its characteristics. The large number of cards involved makes it more difficult to use when stacking the deck, though. By the same token, distributing so many cards on the table makes it easier to adjust meanings to fit things that have already transpired or are about to occur.

Card 1 is, as always, the focus card, and it is selected—not dealt randomly—and placed face up on the table.

Card 2 represents the near past. It indicates the importance of events that have only recently occurred. Of course, the scale involved is very arbitrary, so "recent past" might mean an hour, a day, or a year ago.

Card 3 is one that hinders the focus. Unlike that in the basic cross, this card is not a major setback. It indicates a potential problem that might be overcome or even prevented with a little bit of planning and foresight.

Card 4 is a counterpart to card 2. It marks those things that await in the near future. Again, "near" is a flexible term.

Card 5 marks those things that aid the focus. Like card 3 it is not of great significance. These are things that might go unnoticed or unrecognized if care is not taken.

Card 6 harkens back to events long past. It indicates the deepest roots and most ancient ties of the matter at hand. As with the other future and past cards, the time reflected is not absolute.

Card 7 indicates a force that truly opposes the focus. Unlike that marked by card 3, this is a strong and determined force that will do all it can to disrupt or defeat the best efforts of the focus.

Card 8 is a manifestation of the distant future. It represents the ultimate outcome of the matter at hand. Again, the scale of time involved is impossible to predict.

Card 9, which is the last to be dealt, speaks of a force that strongly supports the focus in its endeavors. It is a counterpart to card 7.

**The tower:** This is also called the *divergent cross*, for it indicates many possible futures and several contributing events from the distant past. Like the extended cross, this one is difficult to use when stacking the deck because of the number of cards involved. The diversification that it offers in predicting the future, however, makes it almost impossible for the cards not to seem truly prophetic.

The first five cards hold the same meanings that they do in the basic cross pattern.

Cards 6, 7, and 8 mark aspects of the distant past. Their input is combined, forming an image of the roots of the present that is far more substantial than those offered in the basic or extended cross patterns. Of course, because there are three cards, the importance of the one that is most appropriate to a given scenario can be given greater emphasis by the Dungeon Master, once again making the cards seem to be truly prophetic in their predictions and accounts.

Cards 9, 10, and 11 herald the coming of the future. Each of these is a divergent possibility, and the actual one that represents the future will depend upon the actions of the person represented by the focus card. Unlike the cards representing the past, the meanings of these cards are not pooled to form a single image, but two of them are to be discounted as alternate possibilities that never materialize. Again, the ability of the Dungeon Master to adjust the ending of an adventure so that it ties into one of the three cards in some way makes this seem very real to the players.

**The pyramid:** This tarokka pattern is traditionally used to select a course of action when many are possible, but none seem clear. Unlike the tower pattern, this does not branch out in the future. Rather, it works from a solid base (the past) to predict a single final outcome. As usual, the first card laid is the focus card. It forms the center of the pyramid, about which the other cards are assembled.

Card 2 indicates the forces that currently oppose the actions of the focus. It is often

powerful, but can be less potent in some cases.

Card 3 is a mirror image of the second. It indicates the advantages and friends of the focus. Like card 2, it may have more or less influence depending upon the exact situation at the time of the casting.

Cards 4, 5, 6, and 7 denote various aspects of the past. These are not melded as they are in the tower, but are each examined in their own light. The concept behind the pyramid is that a series of past events leads to an inescapable future event. Thus each of these cards is taken as the start of one chain of events that will, ultimately, come together with each of the others. Cards 4 and 5 are generally taken to speak of evil or darkness while cards 6 and 7 are often assumed to represent good.

Cards 8 and 9 mark the near future. The former denotes the evil forces that lie ahead while the latter speaks of the good forces that will act upon the focus character.

Card 10 forms the apex of the pyramid and marks the final outcome of events. All that has happened before culminates in this one single card. It may be that evil will triumph, or good, but there will be only one solution in the end.

**Customizing these patterns:** All four of the patterns described above have a number of things in common—in fact, they are all simply variations on a theme. Sometimes the Dungeon Master will want to introduce a tarokka pattern with a specific purpose or to convey more exact information. This is easy enough to do, for the Dungeon Master need only change the meanings of the positions that the cards will fill.

For example, recall the earlier example of the vampire hunters. The Dungeon Master wishes to use the tarokka cards to determine the location of the vampire's lair, the type of weapon that will be most useful against it, the creature's most powerful special abilities, and the goal it is trying to accomplish.

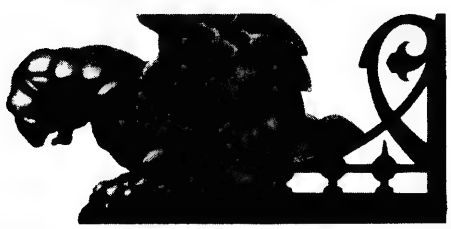
The Dungeon Master could create his or her own pattern for this, or he or she might (to be quick) decide to use the established format of the basic cross. For the purposes of this example, assume the latter.

The focus card is selected to represent the vampire. It might be the *Darklord* or the 8 of Stars (the *Necromancer*), both of which seem valid here. As the second card in the pattern is placed, the Dungeon Master might say, "This card marks the base of the vampire's activity. It will tell us of his lair and his resting place." The next card in the pattern might be taken to indicate the vampire's secret weakness. In this case it might be explained as speaking of "that which the creature fears above all else." The fourth card presents the goals of the vampire or its ultimate desire—a definition easily suited to a card placed above the focus. Finally, the fifth card, which will warn of the vampire's secret power, might be "the hidden ally" or the "inner strength" of the monster.

## Final Notes

It should not have to be said, but let it be so anyway: *These cards, of course, have no power to predict anything.* All they have is the ability to *seem* prophetic, but the only way that they will appear to have this power is if the Dungeon Master takes the time to use them carefully and cleverly in the game. What does this boil down to in game terms? Well—to be honest—lying, trickery, and deceit. Using the tarokka deck to lay out key elements of the game and thus simulate the prediction of future events is nothing more than a bit of *stage* magic. The tarokka deck is a simple way to add ambience and feeling to a RAVENLOFT game. It is a technique for generating mystery and horror.

And in Ravenloft, that's the name of the game.



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# ISLANDS OF TERROR

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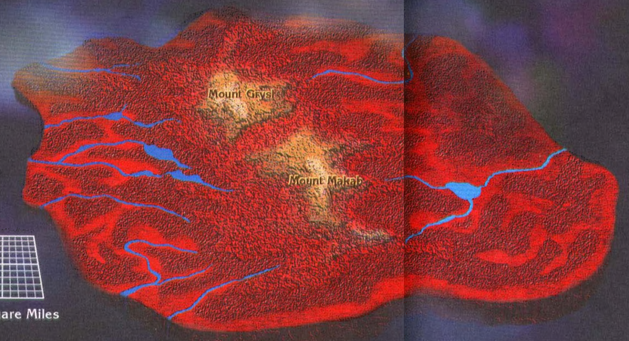
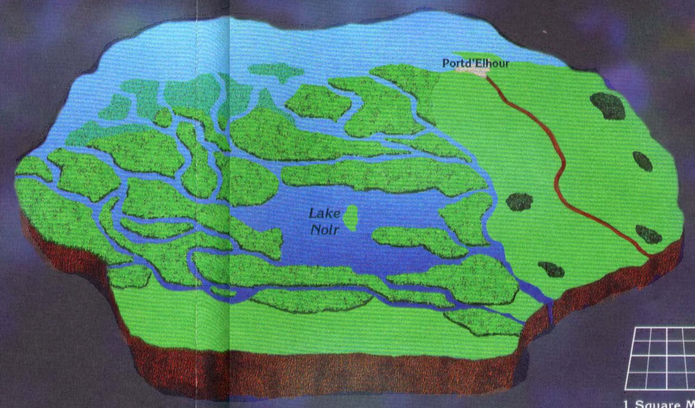
## BLUETSPUR




100 Square Miles

## SOURAGNE

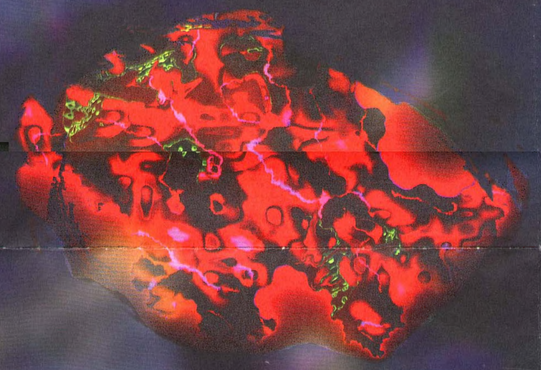



1 Square Mile

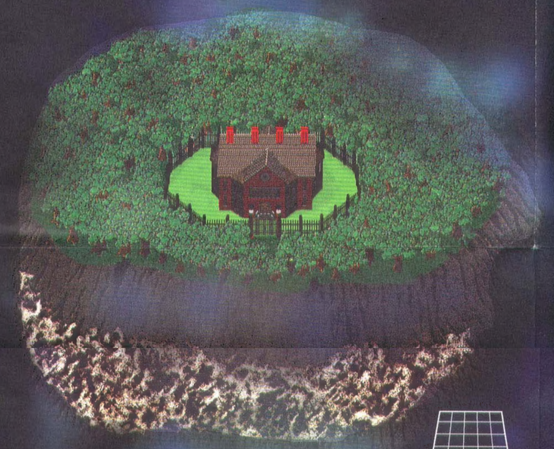
## ZHERISIA

1 Square Mile

## NIGHTMARE LANDS



## DOMINIA

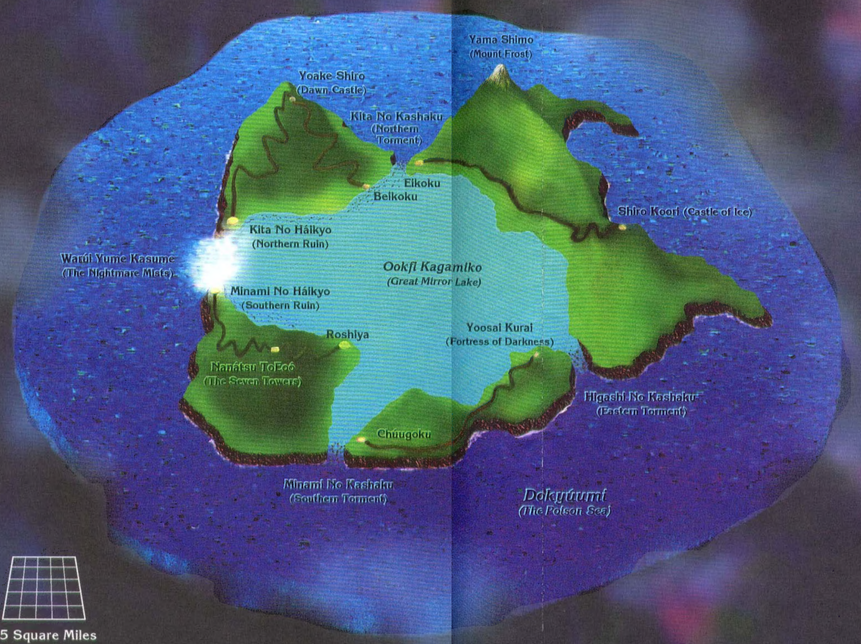


2500 Square Feet

## C'HENNA

100 Square Miles

## ROKUSHIMA TAIYOO




25 Square Miles

## HAR' AKIR

1 Square Mile

## SRI RAJI

1 Square Mile

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# LANDS OF THE CORE

100 Square Miles

SEA OF SORROWS

MARKOVIA
Markov's Estate
Monastery

The Finger
Island of Demise
Isle of Agony

LAMORDIA
Schloss Mordenheim
Leudendorf
Schloss Aubreker
The Sleeping Beast
Abandoned Estate
Neufurchtenburg
Pernault Bay
Port-a-Lucine
D'Honaire Estate
DEMENTLIEU
Chateaufaux
Musarde River
Arden Bay
MORDENT
Mordentshire
Arden River
Ingrad
Rotwald
Castle Pantara
VALACHAN
Helbenik
The Circle
Arden River
Martira Bay
Rivalis
Martok
Vuchar River
Lekar
Stangengrad
Morfenzi
Lake Kriegvogel
Silbervas
Aerie
Pont-a-Museau
RICHEMULOT
Ste. Ronges
Mortigny
Vasha River
Sturben
Vor Zyden
VERBREK
Musarde River
Karina
Castle Hunadora
INVIDIA
Gundar River
Sithicus
Musarde River
Har-Thelen
Nedragaard Keep
Hroth
Il Aluk
Castle Avernus
Corvia River
Corvia
Mayvin
FALKOUNIA
Lake Kronov
Silbervas
Dilisnya Estate
Lechberg
Ilvin
Mount Gries
BORCA
Krezk
Levkarest
Borlisi Estate
Lake Zarovich
Old Svalich Road
Velliki
Mount Ohrdis
Zeidenburg
Luna River
Gundar River
Nyarvon River
BAROUIA
Mount Sawtooth
Teufeldorf
Castle Trithonion
Lake of Red Tears
Maw of Arawn
FORLORN
KARTAKASS
Skald Inn/Taverna
Harmonia
Viaki
Neblus
Karg
Maykle
Tempe River
Tempe Falls
DARKON
Mount Nirka
Vuchar River
Nevuchar Springs
Lake Korolagia
Sidnar
Mount Nyld
KEENING
Mount Lament
Lake Kronov
Viktal
Brujamonte
Timori Road
Kellee
Liara
TEPEST
THE SHADOW RIFT
Little Borchaba River
Koshka Bluffs
Dnar River
Castle Faerhaaven
Borchaba River
Egertus
Kantora
Briarweed Forest
Bergovitsa
NOUA UAASA
Ivlis River
Sanset River
Immol
Toyalis
Hazlik's Estate
HAZLAN
Arbora
Sly-Var

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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® 2nd Edition

# Ravenloft®

Campaign Setting

# Terror in the Land of Mists

SCANNED BY: JACK D. KNIGHT

*In the year 351 of the Barovian calendar, Strahd von Zarovich made a pact with Death—a pact that sealed his fate and created a land of nightmares known as Ravenloft. Other lords of darkness have embraced the Demiplane of Dread as their own, and woe to heroes who wander there. Creatures of the night prey freely upon the living in this land, and day is but a prelude to another night of horror.*

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U.S. $30.00 CAN $42.00 U.K. £21.50 incl. VAT

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